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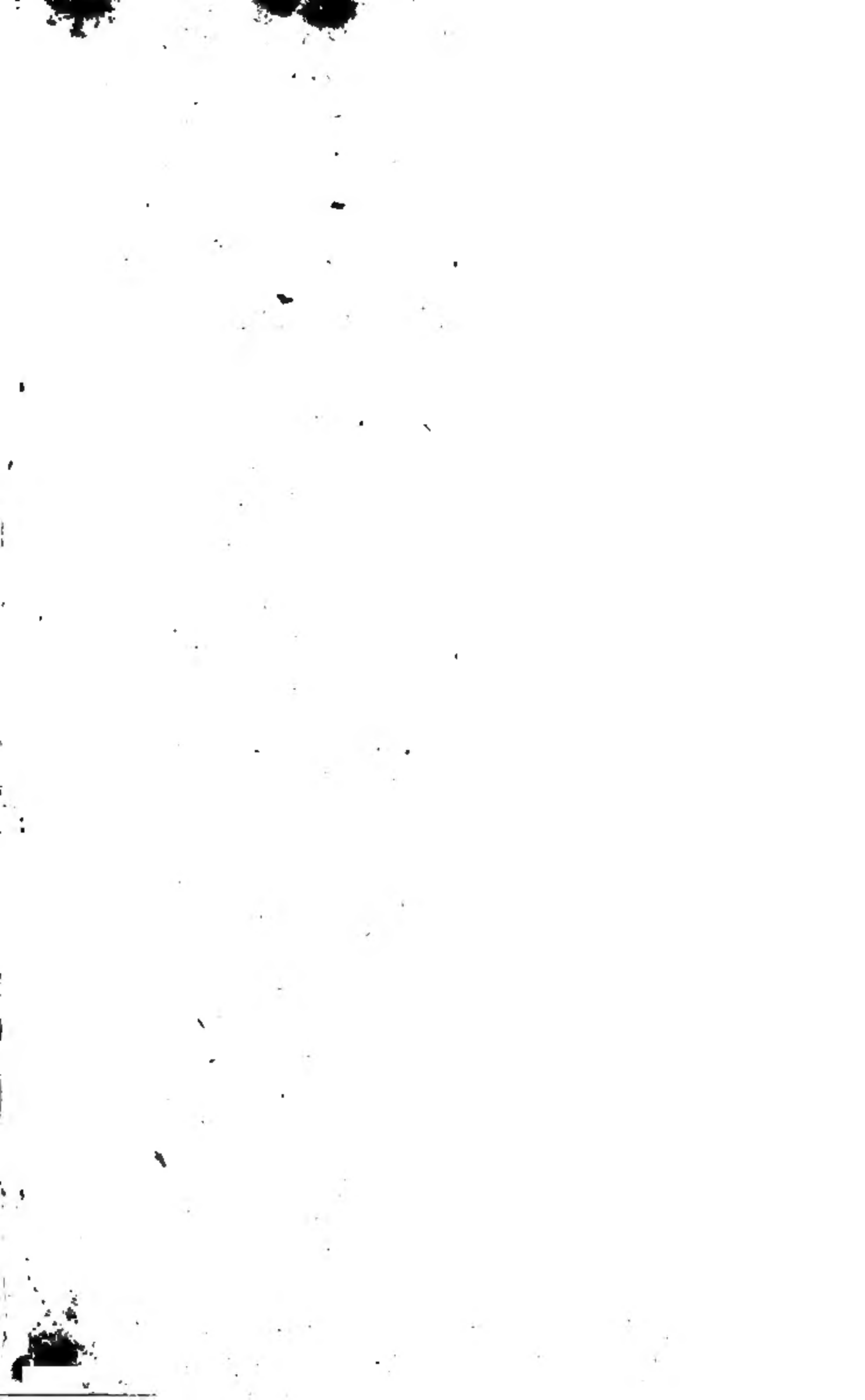
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L E T T E R S .

OF

L I T E R A T U R E .

John Bentham 1758 - 1826.

Native of Edinburgh

1780 came to London

Author by profession

L E T T E R S

OF

LITERATURE.

BY

John Pinkerton

ROBERT HERON, Esq.

ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΜΑΘΕΙΝ ΔΕΙ, ΜΑΘΟΝΤΑ
ΔΕ ΝΟΤΝ ΕΧΕΙΝ.

* This was a name assumed by John Pinkerton, subsequently a well-known writer. (Pinkerton)

L O N D O N,

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LETTERS

L E T T E R S
O F
L I T E R A T U R E.

L E T T E R I.

DEAR SIR,

17 Oct. 1782.

YOU ask me by what means it comes to pass that a rude poetical production of a barbarous age always affects, and pleases, the heart more than the most finished and artificial effort of a refined composer?

To examine this matter thoroughly might employ much philosophical research. I shall only beg leave to lay before you a few remarks, which may not perhaps have offered themselves to your enquiries.

B

IN

IN the first place, what do you call a barbarous age, or country? To what period of society may this denomination be properly limited? The Greeks gave this denomination to the Persians; tho the latter were arrived at more refinement of manners than themselves. We give it to the Chinese: the Chinese with equal propriety to us.

BARBARISM, like every other human accident and quality, must be allowed to be merely comparative. If any one said that most of the European kingdoms had not yet emerged from barbarity, nay, that the most polished of them are yet but barbarous, every beau of the æra of George I. would stroke his chin and smile. Yet were an ancient Roman to revisit this globe, and make a tour to Paris, I have no doubt but he would with great justice affirm that the French were very little improved since his own days; that their customs, their dress, their luxuries, were barbarous *au dernier point*. I say with justice, because, from a comparative view of the Roman manners, every one must allow that they were, in the days of their glory, as much superior to the French in luxury, which
is

is always considered as the great criterion of refinement, as the French are to the Esquimaux Indians. Indeed, one cannot help smiling when the declamations of writers, and of the clergy in particular, against the luxury and refinement of their own several ages, are considered. In the old English days, when the drawing-rooms of palaces were carpeted with clean straw, and maids of honour breakfasted on roast beef, the pulpits shook with virulent invectives against pride of furniture, and delicacy of food. What more can be said now, when forests are robbed of their music for the sake of the rumps of the nightingales? What more will be said, four centuries after this, when, I will venture to prophesy, luxury and refinement will be in such a state as justly to reflect upon this age the appellation of barbarous?

THESE remarks are only made with a view to shew the necessity of defining what is meant by barbaric poetry before the subject is further opened. To the poetry of the modern French, just as the above observations may be, we should no more think of giving the epithet of barbarous, than to that of the ancient Greeks or Romans.

As in youth most people have felt an inclination to write verses, tho in a more mature age they have lost that desire; so it is in the youth of society, if I may so express myself, that poetry has most flourished. Now this youth of society is commonly, like that of man, lost in tempestuous passions, which call forth extraordinary exertions of mind. Such exertions form the very life and soul of poetry. Homer was a witness of such emotions as arise in a barbarous state of society, ere he recorded them in the Iliad. Violent actions, and sudden calamities of all kinds, are the certain concomitants of uncivilized life: to these we owe a poetry warm, rapid, and impetuous, that, like a large river swelling from a bleak mountain, carries the reader along in the barge of fancy, now by vales fragrant with wild flowers, now thro woods resounding with untaught melody, but most generally thro deserts replete with romantic and with dreadful prospects.

SOCIETY always passes through three different stages ere it arrives at refinement. The first is the mere savage state, during which the lord of the world is almost on a level with the
brutes

brutes themselves : living like them in caves, or wretched huts, in the woods that saw him born, and subsisting on wild fruits, and such prey as his rude invention can seize by force or guile. Climate has such power over human happiness as sometimes to fix Society in this state without any hope of further progress : as for instance, in Lapland. The poetry of such a country must of course be always barbaric. The second stage is that of pastoral life. The third may be considered as a kind of middle state between barbarism and civilization ; and is that in which the shepherds of the second state begin to confederate together, for defence of themselves and their flocks, against such of their neighbours as are yet in the first condition, and who, ignorant of property, would admit of no law but force. For that effect towns are built, and, by the collision of different minds, the arts and sciences begin to be struck out, which are in time to spread the light of refinement thro the community.

ALL poetry composed in these different periods of society may with propriety be termed barbaric ; but more particularly that of the first

and second. The Iliad, if not written during the third, is yet a living picture of its manners: and it is to this, as much as to any other circumstance, that it owes its wonderful superiority. For no state of society can be so interesting as that in which the sun of science is beginning to rise, and discover prospects full of splendor and novelty; and in which the mind, vegetating strongly, begins from a vigorous stem to display the buds of elegance.

As in this stage of society poetry may be carried to the highest perfection, so the two first do not impede its real influence: for what it wants in art, in elegance, in harmony, is fully compensated by a wild force of nature, by a simplicity, by a pathos to which every heart is in unison; attributes no less declarative of the power of poetry than the former. Love, a passion of every age and climate, imparts his tenderness even to the savage breast amid the snows of Lapland, as we may perceive from the songs preserved by Scheffer, which you so much admire; and which may be compared to the roses that grow wild, as Mr. Maupertuis informs us, on the banks of the rivers and lakes of that dreary country.

FROM

FROM what I have written, you will no doubt see that I am still the same sceptic in most matters that you left me; thinking always, with Sir Roger de Coverley, that "much may be said on both sides;" so that, if you wish to have an opinion on any subject, you will be much disappointed if you apply to me; but, if you desire to hear doubts instead of decisions, I may perhaps furnish you with a sufficiency.

As I know your fondness for such pieces of rude poetry as have intrinsic merit, I subjoin two that may not perhaps have lain in your way.

THE first is extracted from a History of the Canary Islands by Captain Glas; and is one of the most exquisite pieces of elegiac poetry which I have ever met with. In the year 1418, you must know, Guillen Peraza, an enterprizing youth, was Governor of the Canary Islands; but attempting to reduce Palma, one of them, to the power of Spain, he was there killed. The following verses were made on that occasion, and, as our author informs us, are repeated

peated in Palma to this day: which I do not wonder at, as every one who hears them must wish to remember them; and the heart must be hard indeed, that is not affected by their deep pathos. There is a bit of a pun however in the second stanza, which to understand you must remember that Palma signifies a palm-tree. As perhaps, to use a royal metaphor, your Spanish may be rusty, I shall subjoin a prose translation as literal as possible,

Llorad las damas,
 Affi Dios os vala,
 Guillen Peraza;
 Quedo, en la Palma,
 La flor marchita
 De la su cara.

No eres Palma;
 Eres retama:
 Eres cypres
 De triste rama:
 Eres desdicha;
 Desdicha mala.

Tus campos rompan
 Tristes volcanos.
 No vean plazer
 Sino pesares.
 Cubran tus flores
 Las arenales.

Guillen

Guillen Peraza !

Guillen Peraza !

Do esta tu escudo ?

Do esta tu lanza ?

Todo la acaba

La mala adanza !

‘ Let the ladies lament Guillen Peraza, as God
‘ shall help them *in their miseries*, for in Palma the
‘ flower left his cheek.

‘ Thou *fatal isle*, art not Palma, *a name significant*
‘ *of victory and joy* ; thou art a bramble ; thou art a
‘ cypress of melancholy branch ; thou art a misfor-
‘ tune, a dreadful evil.

‘ Let dismal volcanos burst thy fields. Let no plea-
‘ sures be seen there : but sorrows. Let sands cover all
‘ thy flowers.

‘ Guillen Peraza ! Guillen Peraza ! Where is thy
‘ shield ? Where is thy spear ? A fatal rashness de-
‘ stroyed all !’

THE second has not been published so far
as I know. It is an Indian song, translated by
John Nettles, a Cataba Indian, who learned
English at the school founded by Sir Robert
Boyle, at Williamsburg.

‘ I was

‘ I was walking thro the shade of the grove in
‘ the morning dew. I met my fancy. She talked
‘ with her smiling lips to me. I gave her no answer.
‘ She told me to speak out my mind. Bashful face
‘ spoils good intent. That cleared up my heart.
‘ But when my love is gone from my side, my heart
‘ faints and is low.’

LETTER

LETTER II.

Indifference for fame is by no means to be regarded as a virtue. If desire of praise be a vice, it is a vice that is the author of many virtues; and we are glad to have rich grain, tho we use dung to produce it.

At the same time I perfectly agree with you that common and universal applause is in the eyes of a man of wisdom, or even of true taste, a matter not to be wished. The praise of one fool or knave we should be ashamed of; surely then we ought infinitely more to despise that of an innumerable multitude of both. If a man has vanity, his vanity itself ought to be rather offended than pleased at the incense arising from the flowers of such weeds: even his vanity should have a better taste, as Mr. Gray expresses it,

‘ Praise,’

‘ Praise,’ says Lord Bacon, ‘ is the reflection
 ‘ of virtue : but it is as the glass, or body,
 ‘ which giveth the reflection. If it be from
 ‘ the common people, it is commonly false and
 ‘ naught ; and rather followeth vain persons
 ‘ than virtuous. For the common people un-
 ‘ derstand not many excellent virtues : the
 ‘ lowest virtues draw praise from them ; the
 ‘ middle virtues excite in them astonishment or
 ‘ admiration ; but of the highest virtues they
 ‘ have no sense or perceiving at all ; but shews,
 ‘ and *species virtutibus similes*, serve best with
 ‘ them. Certainly fame is like a river, that
 ‘ beareth up things light and swollen, and
 ‘ drowns things weighty and solid : but, if per-
 ‘ sons of quality and judgement concur, then it
 ‘ is (as the Scripture saith) *Nomen bonum instar*
 ‘ *unguenti fragrantis*. It filleth all round about,
 ‘ and will not easily away : for the odours of
 ‘ ointments are more durable than those of
 ‘ flowers.’

So far this excellent writer, upon whose
 estimate of fame some ill-natured reader may
 perhaps make this censure, that, if Lord Bacon
 had held popular applause in more reverence,
 he

he might have had at least one strong motive not to degrade his high office by the acceptance of a bribe. It may however be remarked upon the above quotation, with more justice, that by *persons of quality* the great chancellor must mean persons whose quality lies in their mind; not our mob of persons of quality, who are most commonly, if you will excuse a pun, persons of no quality at all.

INDIFFERENCE for vulgar fame therefore you will do well to discriminate from indifference for genuine praise of the true flavour. The former certainly belongs to a mind that can stand upon its own basis without the props of adventitious opinions. The latter, I will be bold to say, is the parent of every vice. *What will the world say?* is a reflection that has stifled many a bad inclination in the breasts of those who are either above, or below, every other motive. Want of shame, and total profligacy, follow like a flood if you remove this bank, which excluded them. It is true, this principle has done as much harm as good in the world; a false respect for the opinion of others having destroyed many a virtue, because
it

it did not happen at that time to float upon the stream of fashion. Such effect has false fame upon a little mind : and the force of the true upon a large soul is yet more strong. The praise of the few swells and invigorates it to its most complete perfection, at the same time that it shrinks from multitudinous glory.

For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people's praise, if always praise unmixt ?
And what the people but a herd confused,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things singular ; and, well weigh'd, scarce worth
the praise.

They praise, and they admire, they know not what,
And know not when ; but as one leads the other.
And what delight to be by such extoll'd,
To live upon their tongues, and be their talk,
Of whom to be despised were no small praise ?
His lot who dares be singularly good.

Milt. Par. Reg.

AN author in particular, who has any regard for his fame, should beware of building it upon such a sandy foundation as the applause of the mob. The popular gale, as Horace phrases it, is eternally veering : but in no clime does it
vary

vary more than in that of literature. Fashion, after exerting her power upon most other subjects, has at last chosen literary reputation to display the utmost caprices of her sway. Sometimes it happens wonderfully that she blunders right ; but most commonly her favours are unworthily bestowed. These fashionable scriblers, who are now so common, are however by no means to be envied, for, in the course of a year, of a month, of a day, the public may see the deception ; and, as it happens when we treat a stranger with respect who, we afterwards find, deserves our scorn, their warmest admirers most frequently revenge the insult, they have themselves imposed on their own understandings, by commencing their bitterest enemies.

THERE is a grievance just now reigning in this capital, of which you in the country can scarcely have an idea. After being blest with a variety of swindlers in all occupations, we have at last got *literary swindlers* : people who steal reputation in order to steal money. As the character must be new to you, I will give you some outlines of it.

A LITERARY swindler is a scribler who regards fame as only a road to the temple of wealth : of consequence, so he can get what is here called reputation, he cares not by what means. His first step is to form an intimacy with the printers of newspapers, of magazines, of reviews, and other periodical works. Thro these channels he gravely communicates to the public what are here emphatically denominated *puffs*, or praises of himself and his writings, the more bombastic the better. Those who know the trick laugh at his effrontery : but as they are but few, in comparison of the others, he minds not their derision. The mob, who know nothing of the matter, stare, and wonder they have not heard of such a celebrated writer. Every one, not to appear ignorant, whether he has read the work *puffed*, or not, calls it admirable ; tho, were he to trust his own judgement, he would call it the silliest nonsense that ever fell from a goose's quill. The scribler in the mean time goes on *puffing* as fast as he can ; writes anecdotes of himself ; sends letters from the country telling of his being so happy as to be in the company of himself, and what a modest and wonderful
man

man he himself is. At length by these, and such tricks, he gets what is called a reputation; and perhaps makes a fortune by it, ere the knavery is revealed.

No consideration can make a man of reflection more deaf to popular approbation, than the view of such a character as the above. He will perceive that the fame he pursued, as a chaste bride, is no better than a common prostitute; and abandon the suit with scorn and indignation.

L E T T E R . I I I .

HAD you perused the work of Vavassor, you would cease to wonder at your friend's taking no notice of him in his Essay on Ludicrous Composition. His book *De Dictione Ludicra*, which you think must abound with curious matter, is the most vapid performance you can imagine. You likewise mistake its intention. It is written to prove that the ancients either knew nothing of, or else despised, ludicrous writing; and what do you think is the consequence he derives from this discovery which his half-learning enabled him to make? Why to be sure that we, the poor moderns, must not pretend to feast on more luxurious things than our elders; and must look on a way of writing, unknown to them, as forbidden to us. *Ab lepidum caput!* His book *De Epigrammate* is of the same stuff. The one half of it is filled with invectives, truly jesuitical, against some Collector of Epigrams, because, as would appear, he did not think any
6 of

of Vavassor's Epigrams, worthy a place in his work. However, he afterwards gives his antagonist ample revenge, by presenting us with his own epigrams, in three books; among all which there is not one that will bear reading twice, or indeed once if one could judge of them at first sight.

SUCH are the works of Vavassor, who has written on subjects of elegance without taste, and on subjects of curiosity without interesting, nay, I may add, on subjects of erudition without learning.

WHAT must we think of an author whose works, instead of advancing knowlege, would confine it? whose arguments, if extended, prove, that we must not use gun-powder because unknown at the battle of Marathon; nor printing, because Cicero does not mention it?

YET such a writer has had his admirers among his countrymen; for, according to one of their own prophets,

Un sot trouve toujours un plus sot qui l'admire.

I ENTIRELY agree with you, that Bossu, and the other French critics, whom Addison followed with blind adoration, cannot be held in too sovereign contempt. How mistaken a critic that fine writer was, may merit discussion on another occasion.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

AS I know that Akenfide's work on the Pleasures of Imagination is deservedly one of your most favorite poems, I send you inclosed what, I have no doubt, you will set a due value on; no less than a copy of all the corrections he made with his own hand on that Poem. They were inserted in the margin of the Doctor's printed copy, which afterwards passed into the hands of a gentleman, from a friend of whom, and of my own, a very ingenious young Templar, I received them. At what time they were written I cannot pretend to say, much less to reveal the author's reasons for not giving an edition according to them. Most of them are evidently much for the better; one or two, I am afraid, for the worse. You will observe that a few of them have been adopted by the author in his proposed alteration of the Poem; as appears from the two books, and part of the third, of that alteration, published by Mr. Dyson in his edition of Akenfide's

Poems, 1772, 4to. but far the greater part is unpublished; and that the most valuable, as being evidently written ere the author had taken up the strange idea that poetry was only perfect oratory. So that I will venture to say, that an edition of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, adopting most of these corrections, would be the most perfect ever yet known. Read and judge.

B O O K I.

Argument. Erase the words, *or wonderfulness*: and the sentence, *Pleasure from novelty or wonderfulness with its final cause.*

Verses 1. for *attractive*, read *prevailing*.

28. for *finer*, read *nobler*.

29. for *bloom*, read *pomp*.

30. for *gayest*, *happiest*, read *fairest*, *loftiest*.

44, 45. for *labour court my song*; *Yet*, read
argument invite Me.

72. for *smile*, read *deed*.

94. erase these words,

or what the beams of morn

Draw forth, distilling from the clefted rind

In balmy tears.

106. Erase this line,

That uncreated beauty which delights.

and

and insert these,

As far as mortal eyes the portrait scan,
These lineaments of beauty which delight.

Verse 109—132. read as follows :

As Memnon's marble form, renown'd of old
By fabling Nilus, at the potent touch
Of Morning utter'd from its inmost frame
Unbidden music ; so hath Nature's hand
To certain species of external things
Attuned the finer organs of the mind :
So the glad impulse of congenial powers,
Or of sweet sound, or fair proportion'd form,
The grace of motion, or the pomp of light,
Shoots thro' imagination's tender frame ;
Thro' every naked nerve ; till all the soul
To that harmonious movement now resigns
Her functions. Then the inexpressive strain
Diffuseth its enchantment. Fancy dreams,
Rapt into high discourse with fainted bards,
And wandering thro' Elysium, fancy dreams
Of mystic fountains, and inspiring groves ;
Fountains the haunt of Orpheus ; happy groves
Where Milton dwells. The intellectual power
Bends from his solemn throne a wondering ear
And smiles. The passions to divine repose
Persuaded yield : and love and joy alone
Are waking ; love and joy, such as await
An angel's meditation. O ! attend, &c.

Verse 133. for *touch*, read *move*.

134. for *the refining love*, read *this primæval love*.

136. for *favourite*, read *boliest*.

138. for *loveliest*, read *awful*.

139. for *pregnant stores*, read *copious frame*.

143. for *To three illustrious orders, &c.* to verse 146, read ;

To two illustrious orders still refer

Self-taught. From him, whose rustic toil the lark

Chears warbling, to the bard, whose mighty mind

Grasps the full orb of being ; still the form

Which fancy worships, or sublime, or fair,

Their eager tongues proclaim. I see them dawn, &c.

157. 158. for

_____ run

The great career of justice.

read

_____ act

The great decrees.

168. for *That*, read *Which*.

169—172. read thus :

And mocks possession ? Why departs the soul

Wide from the track and journey of her times

To grasp the good she knows not ? In the field

Of things which may be, in the spacious field

Of science, potent arts, or dreadful arms,

To raise up scenes in which her own desires

Con-

Contented may repose; when things which are
Pall on her temper, like a twice told tale:
Her temper still demanding to be free;
Spurning the gross, &c.

Verse 177. for *Alpine*, read *mid-air*.

179. for *rowling his bright wave*, read *rowl his
glittering tide*.

183. for *That*, read *Which*.

195. for *far effus'd*, read *sallying forth*.

197. for *through*, read *round*.

222—270. This whole paragraph to be inserted
after verse 278, Book III.

337. for *young*, read *fond*.

338. for *the*, read *your*.

358. for *Th' indulgent mother*, read *The gracious
parent*.

361. for *Still*, read *There*.

362. for *native*, read *proper*.

363. for *Ilumes*, read *Directs*.

364. for

— *The generous glebe,
Whose bosom smiles with verdure,*
read,

— *The glow of flowers,
Which gild the verdant pasture.*

366. for *nestar'd*, read *downey*.

Verse

Verse 387. for *Nor let the gleam, &c.* to verse 402.
read thus,

Nor be the hopes,
Which flatter youthful bosoms, here appall'd.
Nor let false terrors urge you to renounce
This awful theme of undecentful good,
And truth eternal. Tho th' abhorred threats
Of sacred superstition, in the quest
Of that kind pair constrain her kneeling slave
To quench, and set at nought, the lamp of God
Within his frame : thro' desarts, thorns, and mire,
Tho forth she lead him, credulous, and dark,
And aw'd with dubious notion, tho at length
Benighted, terrified, afflicted, lost,
She leave him to converse with cells, and graves,
And shapes of death ; to listen all alone,
And, by the screaming owl's accursed song,
To watch the dreadful workings of his heart ;
Or talk with spectres on eternal woe ;
Yet be not you dismayed. A gentler star
Your lovely search enlightens. From the grove, &c.

403. for *talk'd*, read *fate*.

413. for *harmonious*, read *persuasive*.

431—437.

Which conquers chance and fate ; or whether tuned
For triumph, on the summit to proclaim
Her toils ; around her brow to twine the wreath
Of

Of everlasting praise; thro future worlds
To follow her interminated way.

440. for,

Whether in vast majestic pomp array'd,
Or dress'd for pleasing wonder, or serene
In beauty's rosy smile.

read,

When majesty arrays her, and when deck'd
By beauty and by love.

Verse 459. for *pregnant*, read *copious*.

460. for *the bounteous*, read *their parent*.

461—464. read thus,

————— such the flowers,
With which young Maia for her genial song
Rewards the village maid; and such the trees,
Which blith Pomona rears on Severn's bank
To feed the bowl of Ariconian swains,
Who quaff beneath her branches. Lovelier still, &c.

474. for,

There most conspicuous even in outward shape.

read,

There in eternal things conspicuous most.

476. for *conducting*, read *directing*.

487. for *range*, read *path*.

534. for *congenial*, read *paternal*.

Verse

Verse 559—563. read,

Of harmony and wonder. Different far
 She starts indignant on the patriot's eye
 Among the servile herd : her nervous hand
 Points as she turns the record, and appeals
 To ancient honour ; or in act, &c.

568. for *the sacred*, read *untrodden*.

570. for,

Of all heroic deeds, and fair desires.

read,

Of generous counsels, of heroic deeds.

575—585. read as follows,

Which Hesper sheds along the vernal heaven ;
 If I from Superstition's gloomy haunts,
 Impatient steal, and from th' unseemly rites
 Of barbarous domination, to attend
 With hymns thy presence in the lonely shades,
 By their malignant footsteps unprofaned.
 Descend, O famous Power, thy glowing mien
 Such, and so elevated all thy form,
 As when the great barbarian foiled again,
 And yet again diminished, hid his face
 Among the herd of satraps, and of kings ;
 And at the lightning, &c.

589. for *heroic*, read *unconquer'd*.

595. for *blooming*, read *sacred*.

598. for *flight*, read *meed*.

Verse

Verse 599. for *plume*, read *tail*.

601. for,

Thy name, thrice honour'd! with th' immortal praise.
read,

Thy kindred name to no ignoble praise.

602. for *Nature*, read *Beauty*.

B O O K II.

57. for *haughty*, read *jealous*.

58. for *harmonious*, read *blessed*.

75. for,

To raise harmonious Fancy's native charm.
read,

To raise enamour'd Fancy's native joy.

98, 99. for,

Her awful light discloses to bestow
A more majestic pomp on beauty's fame!
read,

Her awful front unveils to raise the scene,
And adds to beauty honours not her own!

116. for *course*, read *flight*.

210. for *baleful charms*, read *unblest pomps*.

212. for *Gracious*, read *Righteous*.

223. for,

A purple cloud came floating thro the sky.
read,

Came floating thro the sky a purple cloud.

Verse 225. for *soft'ning sorrow, of;* read, *generous
pity, or.*

275. for *hills*, read *cliff*.

276. for *cliff*, read *beath*.

277. for *recumbent*, read *incumbent*.

282, 283. for,

Remurmuring rush'd the congregated floods
With hoarser intundation.

read,

More ponderous rush'd the congregated floods,
And louder still resounded.

365. for *fresh water'd*, read *irriguous*.

477. for *joys*, read *hopes*.

599. for *Nature calls*, read *God commands*.

663. for *pictures*, read *phantoms*.

664. for, *When sunshine fills the bed*.

read,

When sunshine rushes on the brow of sleep,
And fills the curtain'd space.

769. for,

Defiled to such a depth of fordid shame.

read,

To such a baseness have not yet depraved.

B O O K III.

Argument. After the sentence, *Final cause of the sense of ridicule*, insert, *The pleasure from novelty with its final cause.*

Verse 7, 8, 9. read thus,

With charms resistless. Not the spacious west,
Nor all the teeming regions of the south
Contain a quarry, &c.

27. for *lovely*, read *pleasing*.

59. for *The wicked bear*, read *Which guilt endures*.

72. for,

I sing of Nature's charms, and touch well-pleas'd.
read,

I sing of good and fair, touching well-pleas'd.

75. for *aukward arts*, read *arts abound*.

96. for *Some*, read *This*.

98. for *Some*, read *This*.

278. Here insert the paragraph B. I. v. 222.

365. for *seeds*, read *works*.

366. for *attemper'd*, read *imprinted*.

383. for *loveliest*, read *pleasing*.

384. for *rowls his daring eye*, read *darts his searching eye*.

387. for *Flit swift*, read *Proceed*.

Verse 389. ~~for~~ *Disclose*, read *Reveal*.

403. for *blue serene*, read *azure vault*.

436. for *warbled*, read *holy*.

503. for,

Than space, or motion, or eternal time.

read,

Than his own essence, or essential powers.

516. for *feelingly*, read *tenderly*.

552. for *furious*, read *frantic*.

576. for *the only few*, read *what tho but few*.

587. for,

Distills her dews, and from the silken gem

Its lucid leaves unfolds.

read,

Unlocks her gems, and from the spreading leaves

Throws her light incense round.

626. to the end, read as follows :

He meant, he made us to regard and love

What he regards and loves ; the life and health

Of general nature ; to do good like him

To every being round us. Thus the men,

Whom Nature's frame delights, with God himself

Hold daily converse ; act upon his plan ;

And form to his the relish of their souls.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

IT is no incurious subject to enquire, what is the spirit of lyric poetry? Or, in what does its discrimination from other kinds of poetry consist? Those who have even pretended to write in this style have often betrayed perfect ignorance of the very principles of so exquisite a mode of composition.

THE Greeks, the Greeks alone, my friend, are the masters, and their works the models of this kind of poetry. If we examine these models with care, we shall perceive that this species of poetry divides itself, in resemblance of the works of nature, into two kinds, the sublime, and the beautiful. In the first class Pindar stood without a rival till Gray appeared. In the second Anacreon and Sappho still remain without equal competitors.

D

FROM

FROM these writers, therefore, the genuine spirit of lyric poetry may be discovered. From Pindar we learn that sudden transitions, bold and abrupt metaphors, a regular cadence, and a warm and impetuous glow of thought and language,

Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn, are essentials of the higher mode of lyric writing. I place a regular cadence among these requisites in spite of Dryden's wonderful ode; which is of itself worth all that Pindar has written, as a large diamond is worth a vast heap of gold, because that master-piece is a dithyrambic poem, not a lyric one. And that as well for its want of regularity, as for its subject, which, being perfectly convivial as its title speaks, falls with much propriety into that class which the ancients called dithyrambic, and which were most commonly sacred to Bacchus.

IN the second division of lyric poetry the essentials are less easily fixed. Harmony of cadence, and beauty and warmth of sentiment, passion, and expression, seem the principal. Above all, uncommon elegance in turns of lan-

language, and in transition, are so vital to this kind of lyric poetry in particular, that I will venture to say they constitute its very soul; a particular that none of our lyric writers, before Gray, at all attended to. His mode of expression is truly lyrical; and has a classic brevity and terseness, formerly unknown in English, save to Milton alone. Of which to produce a few instances from his very first Ode: *purple year, for flowers of Spring: insect youth, for young insects: bonied spring, for honey of Spring: liquid noon, for liquid air of noon*, with many others, are all modes of expression of the genuine and uncommon lyric hue.

HUME has well observed, in his Essay on Simplicity and Refinement, that ‘no criticism can be instructive which descends not to particulars, and is not full of examples and illustrations.’ It may be added to this very just remark, that the more minute criticism is, the more need it has of example, to give a kind of body to its evanescence. For this reason, since I have spoken of transition as so material a form of the ode, I shall beg leave to consider a moment one of the best in any language with

regard to this beauty in particular, namely Dr. Beattie's Ode on Lord Hay's birth-day: a production which that supreme judge of lyric poetry, Mr. Gray, praises with great justice for the lyric texture of the thoughts.

THE opening of this fine piece is however unhappy. *A Muse* for a poet is a violent and bad metaphor. The Muse in any good modern writer only means *Poesy* personified by another name. *A Muse unstained* is worse. Unstained is an inelegant epithet even when applied in its proper sense to garments, &c. as it gives an idea that they might have been stained. *Unstained with art* is a mixed metaphor, one of the worst faults of composition: but, leaving those painful remarks, these lines,

No gaudy wreath of flowers she weaves,

But twines with oak the laurel leaves

Thy cradle to adorn,

are exquisite: the civic crown being of oak, the victor's of laurel. The image is beautiful to a degree of lyric perfection. But observe the transition to the next stanza, and pronounce it truly lyric:

For not on beds of gaudy flowers

Thine ancestors reclined, &c.

This

This transition in prose were ridiculous; for what connexion between not giving a child a wreath of flowers, and the reason assigned, namely, because his ancestors did not recline on them? Yet this want of connexion forms the beauty of this very lyric transition.

THE next ‘To hurl the dart,’ &c. may be called a transition *from* a distance as the last was *to* a distance. It is equally classic with the former.

IN the 4th stanza the Muse is as happily introduced as she was unhappily brought in at first. It would require too much length to display the rest of the transitions in this ode, which are all of them fine; but none more so than that in this stanza, ‘Yon castle’s glittering towers’, &c. which brings the very object before your eyes.

As such microscopic parts of criticism are rather fatiguing to the mental eye, I shall here conclude with assuring you, tho perhaps with a lyric transition in prose, that I am very truly, &c.

LETTER VI.

I AGREE with you that the life of the latter Cato would, if executed with a pen worthy of it, prove one of the noblest pieces of biography extant; not to mention the public benefit that might be derived from it in these our evil days; days in which a remote sound of the applause reaped by patriot virtue has hardly reached our ears.

Of all the great characters of antiquity, few equal, none exceed, that of Cato. The vastness, the force of his mind, are only to be rivalled by its regular consistency; a consistency that makes all his actions appear of a piece; a beauty, if I may so express myself, rarely to be observed in the portraits of heroes; many of whom seem to have fallen as short of common exertion in some passages of their lives, as they exceeded it in others. How little, how mean, how trifling the character of Cicero when opposed to such a model! The very first storm of public outrage tore his feeble patri-

patriotism up by the roots; while the strong virtue of Cato, like a mountain oak, received fresh vigor from the utmost rage of the tempest.

THEY who peruse the Familiar Letters of Cicero will find that orator, malapert and various as he is, uniform in his respect and almost adoration of Cato. Such was the power of real dignity of mind over saucy and loquacious eloquence! These letters are enriched by the preservation of one of Cato, being the only composition of his that has reached us; and which shews us clearly that his soul, solid as diamond, was brightened with politeness. Even friendship, that greatest snare of a lofty mind, could not influence him against the consistent plan of his virtue; yet his refusal to act against his real sentiments has nothing harsh, but is given at the same time with a firmness that leaves nothing to hope, and with a mildness that leaves nothing to censure.

SPIRIT of Cato, what must be thy indignation if thou perceivest the degeneracy of a country in which Hampden and Russel have bled!

It is remarkable that three of the best Roman poets have, as it were, vied with each other, who should most elevate the character of Cato. Virgil and Horace, tho the minions of a court whose frame was cemented with the blood of that patriot, have almost excelled their common expression in his praise. The first in the Eneid, where his hero finds Cato in Elysium giving laws to the good;

—— His dantem jura Catonem.

The second in his odes;

Et cuncta terrarum subacta,

Præter atrocem animum Catonis.

But Lucan, above all, has risen to the actual sublime, fired by the contemplation of that sublime character,

Victrix causa deis placuit: sed victa Catoni.

To which of the poets is the preeminence due? Virgil's praise is wonderfully fine at first sight; for how good, how just, how virtuous, must he be, who is qualified to give laws to the good, to the just, to the virtuous, in Elysium itself? But, like the other beauties of this writer, it will not bear a close examination.

For

For what laws are to operate among the blessed, where there can be no punishment nor reward? How can they receive laws, who are emancipated from all possibility of crime? The praise is therefore futile and ridiculous; nothing being more absurd than to erect a column of apparent sublimity upon the morass of falsehood.

THE praise of Horace has great truth and dignity. Every thing on earth, in subjection to Cæsar save the mind of Cato, is a great, a vast thought, and would even arise to the sublime, were it not for that of Lucan, which exceeds it; and nothing can be sublime to which a superior conception may be found.

THE praise of Lucan is sublimity itself, for no human idea can go beyond it. Cato is set in opposition to the gods themselves: nay is made superior in justice, tho not in power. Now the power of the pagan deities may be called their extrinsic, justice their intrinsic, virtue. Cato excelled them, says Lucan, in real virtue, tho their adventitious attribute of power admitted no rival.

L E T.

LETTER VII.

YOUR opinion of the comedy of *Le Mechant* I heartily subscribe to, tho Mr. Gray has pronounced it the best comedy he ever read. It is perfectly in the style of the French tragedy, inactive, and declamatory. Yet I do not wonder at Mr. Gray's favourable opinion of it, when he admired the silly declamation of Racine so much as to begin a tragedy in his very manner; which however he was so fortunate as not to go thro with,

Our stage, thank heaven, refuses the insipidity of the French drama; and requires an action, a business, a vigor, to which the run of *Gerontes and Damons*, which all their comedies are stuffed with, are mere strangers. Moliere, in attempting to introduce laughter into the French comedy, has blundered upon mere farce; for it is the character of that nation always to be in extremes. In short, if we except Fontaine, I know of no writer in the French

French language who has real claim to poetical merit. Their language is not the language of verse; nor are their thoughts, or their *costume*, those of poetry. Fontaine uses their language familiarly, in which way only it can be used to advantage. His thoughts are likewise in the style of mere familiar humour. Comic tales may be well written in French, but nothing else. Their prose writers, I readily allow, yield to none in the world; but of their poetry the *bon mot* said by one of themselves to Voltaire, which was, *Les François n'ont pas la tete epique*, may be with great justice enlarged thus, LES FRANÇOIS N'ONT PAS LA TETE POETIQUE.

IN English comedy Congreve, I believe, stands without a rival. His plots have great depth and art; perhaps too much: his characters are new and strong: his wit genuine; and so exuberant, that it has been alleged as his only fault, that he makes all his characters inherit his own wit. Yet this fault will not be imputed by adepts, who know that the dialogue of our comedy cannot possibly be too spirited and epigrammatic, for it requires language as well as characters stronger than nature.

SHAK-

SHAKSPERE excels in the strength of his characters and in wit; but as plot must be regarded as an essential of good comedy, he must not be erected as a model in the comic academy; a loss sufficiently compensated by the reflection, that it were vain to place him as a model whose beauties transcend all imitation.

TRAGEDY and Comedy both ought certainly to approach as near the truth of life as possible; in so much that we may imagine we are placed with *Le Diable Boiteux* on the roof of the house, and perceive what passes within. This rule in Tragedy cannot be too strictly observed, tho it has escaped almost every writer of modern Tragedy; the characters of which speak similies, bombast, and every thing except the language of real life; so that we are eternally tempted to exclaim, as Falstaff does to Pistol, 'Pr'ythee speak like a man of this world.'

IN comedy this rule ought by no means to be adhered to; as insipidity is the worst fault writing can have, but particularly comedy; whose chief quality it is to be poignant. Now poignancy cannot be effected without strong character; but an excellent tragedy may be

written without a strong character in it, witness Douglas. The characters of Tragedy therefore cannot have too much truth: but those of Comedy ought to resemble the painted scenes, which, if examined too nearly, are mere daubings; but at a proper distance have the very truth of nature, while the beauties of more delicate paintings would not be perceived.

SENTIMENTAL Comedy, as it is called, tho' of late birth in England, is yet the comedy of Menander and of Terence. Terence is quite full of sentiment, and of a tenderness which accompanies it; and so barren of wit and humour, that I only remember two passages in his six comedies that provoke a smile; for a smile is all they can provoke. The one is that scene which passes after the eunuch is supposed to have ravished a young lady. This is the only proof of the humour of Terence: and the only sample of his wit we have in the reply of an old miser to one who he expected brought him tidings of a legacy, but who instead thereof makes very gravely a moral observation to the impatient old man, who peevishly retorts, "What! hast thou brought nothing here but one maxim?"

SENTI-

SENTIMENTAL Comedy bore a very short sway in England. Indeed it was incompatible with the humour of an English audience, who go to a comedy to laugh, and not to cry. It was even more absurd; it may be added, in its faults than that of which Congreve is the model; for sentiments were spoken by every character in the piece, whereas one sentimental character was surely enough. If a man met with his mistress; or left her; if he was suddenly favoured by fortune; or suddenly the object of her hatred; if he was drunk, or married; he spoke a sentiment: if a lady was angry, or pleased; in love, or out of it; a prude, or a coquet; make room for a sentiment! If a servant girl was chid, or received a present from her mistress; if a valet received a purse, or a horsewhipping; good heavens, what a fine sentiment!

THIS fault I say was infinitely more absurd than that of Congreve; for a peasant may blunder on wit, to whose mind sentiment is totally heterogeneous. Besides, Congreve's wit is all his own; whereas most of the said sentiments may be found in the Proverbs of Solomon.

No

No wonder then this way of writing was soon abandoned even by him who was its chief leader. Goldsmith in vain tried to stem the torrent by opposing a barrier of low humour, and dullness and absurdity, more dull and absurd than English sentimental Comedy itself.

It is very much to the credit of that excellent writer Mr. Colman, that, while other dramatists were lost in the fashion of sentiment, his comedies always present the happiest medium of nature; without either affectation of sentiment, or affectation of wit. That the able translator of Terence should yet have sufficient force of mind to keep his own pieces clear of the declamatory dullness of that ancient, is certainly a matter deserving of much applause. *The Jealous Wife*, and *the Clandestine Marriage*, with others of his numerous dramas, may be mentioned as the most perfect models of comedy we have: to all the other requisites of fine comic writing they always add just as much sentiment and wit as does them good. This happy medium is the most difficult to hit in all composition, and most declares the hand of a master.

By

By the *School for Scandal* the style of Congreve was again brought into fashion; and sentiment made way for wit, and delicate humour. That piece has indeed the beauties of Congreve's comedies, without their faults: its plot is deeply enough perplexed, without forcing one to labour to unravel it; its incidents sufficient, without being too numerous; its wit pure; its situations truly dramatic. The characters however are not quite so strong as Congreve's; which may be regarded as the principal fault of this excellent piece. Lesser faults are Charles's sometimes blundering upon sentiments; nay sometimes upon what are the worst of all sentiments, such as are of dangerous tendency, as when Rowley advises him to pay his debts, before he makes a very liberal present, and so to act as an honest man ere he acts as a generous one.

Rowley. Ah, Sir, I wish you would remember the proverb ———

Charles. Be just before you are generous.——
Why so I would if I could, but Justice is an old lame hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace with Generosity for the soul of me.

This

This sentiment, than which nothing can be more false and immoral, is always received by the silly audience with loud applause, whereas no reprobation can be too severe for it. A lesser blemish lies in the verses tagged to the end of the play, in which one of the characters addresses the audience. The verses are an absurdity, the address a still greater; for the audience is by no good actor supposed to be present: and any circumstance that contributes to destroy the apparent reality of theatrical representation, cannot meet with too sharp censure. But it gives me pain to remark any faults in a piece that in general so well merits the applause it constantly receives. I shall only observe that the sentiment put into Charles's mouth in the last scene, tho' not liable to the objections brought against the former, is yet incompatible with the character, which is set in strongest opposition to the sentimental one of Joseph. The words I mean are ' If I
 ' don't appear mortified at the exposure of my
 ' follies, it is because I feel at this moment the
 ' warmest satisfaction at seeing you my liberal
 ' benefactor.' ...

It may be observed that every thing like a sentiment is sure to meet with applause on our theatre; which the actors well express by calling sentiments *clap-traps*. This trick of securing applause by sentiments lately proved the salvation of the very worst tragedy that ever appeared on any stage: for the audience had so much applauded the two first acts, from the number of those *clap-traps*, that they were ashamed to retract, so that the piece took a little run very quietly, to the disgrace of our taste, it being one of those very farragos of nonsense that *The Rehearsal* was written to expose to due scorn: and, had it been fabricated before the æra of that witty performance, it would certainly have had the honour of being placed in the first shelf of absurdity.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

HOW can you treat Petrarch with so much contempt? Tho I agree with you that there is a tedious sameness in most of his compositions, yet I by no means think him without his merit. The very idea indeed of reading upwards of three hundred sonnets gives pain; the stated form and measure of that kind of poetry being so disgustingly similar, that I believe no man of genius would now write twenty in a life time. Yet it has its beauties; and tho your comparison of a desert of sand, where the same objects always meet the eye, were allowed in speaking of Petrarch; nevertheless in travelling that desert you will now and then, at great intervals, I confess, light on a spring surrounded with verdure and flowers. In his own country, I suppose, the purity of his language, and his antiquity, secure his fame, independent of his poetical beauties, which are not many.

I ALSO grant you that he abounds with false beauties; among which the most gross and disgusting is his playing on the name of his mistress, which unhappily signified a laurel tree, in every other line: but I cannot assent to your proposition, that a writer of real genius may be in a fault, but can never happen on a false beauty. Shakspeare has many false beauties; and so has Milton.

It is amazing that a writer, who in some passages discovers great force of mind, should so utterly lose himself in the unnatural metaphysics of love. Yet, by a singular fate, it is to his weakness that he owes his fame; for his platonic passion threw such a fairy light round himself and his writings, as rendered them very conspicuous in these dark times. But in some of his Odes, or Canzoni, he proves himself not wholly undeserving of his fame at this day; witness the Vth, in which there are beauties of the highest kind, as in this stanza:

Una parte del mondo è che si giace
 Mai sempre in ghiaccio, ed in gelate nevi,
 Tutta luntana del cammin del sole:
 La, sotto i giorni nubilo e brevi,

Nemica

Nemica naturalmente di pace
 Nasce una gente, a cui'l morir non dole.
 Questa se piu devota, che non soli
 Col Tedesco furor la spada cigne;
 Turchi, Arabi, e Caldei,
 Con tutti quei che speran negli dei
 Di qua dal mar che fa l'onde sanguigne,
 Quanto fian de prezzar conoscer dei:
 Popolo ignudo, paventoso, e lento;
 Che ferro mai non strigne,
 Ma tutti colpi suoi commette al vento.

and in these lines of the same ode:

Pon mente al temerario ardir di Serse;
 Che fece, per calcar i nostri liti,
 Di novi ponti oltraggio alla marina;
 E vedrai nella morte de mariti
 Tutte vestiti a brun le donne Perse;
 E tinto in rosso il mar di Salamina.
 E non, pur questa misera ruina,
 Del popolo infelice del Oriente
 Vittoria ten promette;
 Ma Maratona, e le mortali stratte,
 Che difese il leon con poca gente.

In Canzone XXIX. this stanza is eminently beautiful:

Voi cui Fortuna ha posto in mano il freno
 Delle belle contrade,

Di che nulla pietà par che vi stringa,
 Che fan qui tante pelligrine spade?
 Perchè 'l verde terreno
 Del barbarico sangue si dipinga?
 Vano error vi lusinga.
 Poco vedete; e parvi veder molto:
 Che'n cor venale amor cercate, o fede.
 Qual più gente possiede
 Colui e più da' suoi nemici avvolto,
 O diluvio raccolto
 Di che deserti strani
 Per innondar i nostri dolci campi!
 Se dalle proprie mani
 Questo n'avven, or chi fia che ne scampi?

His sonnets, truly fine, and in which the train of thought varies, might be reduced to about a dozen. The real poetical beauties of Dante might likewise fall into very small compass; consisting chiefly of the celebrated tale of Ugolino; and of that in the close of the Vth Canto of the Inferno; which is as exquisite for tenderness, as the other is remarkable for terror. Now, that beauties of writers are fashionable reading, a small duodecimo extracted from these two poets would, if performed with taste, be an acceptable present to the public: for no

works

works I have read afford so fair a field for selection as those of the fathers of Italian poetry; as they contain diamonds of the finest water lost in a mass of common soil. Yet were they both men of real genius; for superlative genius must be discovered from the amazing height it sometimes rises to; tho at other times it displays no extraordinary vigor. The genius of Petrarch is however more equal and correct than that of Dante; yet he by no means wanted strength when he chose to exert it. Nor was Dante, whose excellence is native force, deficient in describing the tender passions, as may be seen in the Canto above referred to. Petrarch's learning almost destroyed his genius. Dante's genius shot freely, having no bound of erudition to confine its vigor: he is a bold original writer, whose beauties are peculiarly his own, while his faults are those of the times.

LETTER IX.

PERHAPS no question of criticism may afford room for more curious investigation than this: *In what quality does the perpetual and universal excellence of writing consist?* or, in other words, *What property of composition is certain to procure it the classic and legitimate admiration of all ages and countries?*

To decide on this point it is certainly the surest method to judge of the future by the past, and to pronounce that the same perfections which have secured to an author of three thousand years standing his due applause, will most infallibly effect the same end to a modern writer.

A POET of fine talents, but of far superior taste, has pronounced wisdom or good sense to be the very fountain of perfect composition.

Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.

HOR.

And

And this maxim will be found to hold true in every species of writing whatever. Good sense may be called the salt that preserves the other qualities of writing from corruption. This property is alike required in every branch of the belles lettres ; but there are others which may be considered as confined to one particular path of writing.

SUCH is imaginary invention with respect to poetry : I say, imaginary invention, to distinguish it here from that scientific invention which belongs to the judgment. This invention, as the parent of novelty, is the superlative qualification of poetry, and nothing can contribute more to procure it permanent admiration. Yet invention itself is inferior to strong sense even in poetry, for there are poems in which the invention is rich yet disgusts by its futility ; not being conducted by that *acer animi vis*, that keen force of mind, which always accompanies true genius.

If good sense is therefore a praise superior to invention itself in poetry, we may with great safety pronounce it one of the very first qualities that ensures applause to composition.

A BEAU-

A BEAUTIFUL work of genius may be aptly compared to a beautiful woman. Good sense may be called its health, without which it cannot live, charming as its other powers may be. But tho a woman has good health, it does not follow that she is fair; nay we often applaud a *morbidezza*, or an appearance of sickly delicacy, as an improver of female beauty; and in this the comparison fails. A work, as well as its present parallel, must have the bloom and the features of beauty, with grace and elegance in its motions, to attract admiration. The bloom and fine features, the grace and elegance, of a work consist in its style; which is the part that is most commendatory of it, as outward beauty and grace are of a woman considered as an object of sight.

THE bloom and the features of composition lie in the verbage and figures of its style; the grace in the manner and movement of that style.

A WORK, immoral and unwise, has yet been found to live by its style, in spite of these defects. Style is therefore a quality of writing
 3 equal,

equal, if not superior, to good sense: for the latter without the former will by no means preserve a work, tho the reverse of the rule is true. Indeed a fine style is commonly joined with good sense; both being the offspring of the same luminous mind.

CAN a work live long which is defective in style? Impossible. Homer's style is the richest in the Greek language. Style has preserved Herodotus in spite of his absurdities. Every ancient, who has reached us, has an eminent style in his respective walk and manner. Style has saved all the Latin writers, who are only good imitators of the Greeks. Terence is only the translator of Menander; Sallust an imitator of Thucydides; Horace is an imitator and almost a translator in all his odes, as we may boldly pronounce on comparing them with such very minute fragments of Grecian lyric poetry as have reached us. Yet it was he who exclaimed

O imitatores servum pecus!

Style has saved Virgil entirely, who has not the most distant pretence to any other attribute of a poet.

Good

Good sense I have called the health of a work without which it cannot live ; but a work may live without much applause : and the first quality of writing that attracts universal and permanent fame was the subject of the present discussion. This we have found to be **STYLE.**

LETTER

LETTER X.

TO your observations on the barbarism of some modern customs, may be added those which arise from the following lines of Juvenal, in his thirteenth satire ;

Cœrula quis stupuit Germani lumina, flavam
Cæsariem madido torquentem cornua cirro ?

Who would have thought that our side-curls and frizzled toupee had such antiquity, but along with that such barbarism, as to be the fashion of the Germans ere they left their native woods ? Tacitus in his excellent book of the manners of the Germans, mentions their twisting their locks into horns and rings, as he calls them. It is curious to observe that a custom invented in the most barbarous times should again be brought into vogue at the most polite period.

WE

WE see that both Juvenal and Tacitus have chanced on the same appellation, in mentioning this strange piece of dress: the curls bearing indeed a very strong resemblance to the horns of animals. Happy Germans, will some modern husbands be tempted to cry, whose horns were only of hair! How would Juvenal stare if he came into a modern assembly, and saw every man in the company have his horns, *non sine cauda*.

PERHAPS it has escaped you that the invention of hair-powder did not arise in the country of the *plica Polonica*, as some malicious antiquaries affirm. Fauchet, in his *Antiquités Gaulloises*, tells us that the kings of the Merovingian race were in use to powder the hair of their heads and beards with gold dust; an extravagance to which our beaux and belles may arrive in time.

FASHIONS may be laughed at, but must be followed to avoid greater evils.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

I TOTALLY controvert your opinion that our language has arrived at its highest pitch of refinement: so far from that, I know of no writer before Gray whose works are of classic correctness, except Milton.

HUME, I remember, tells us very gravely that the language of Pope is too much refined, as the language of some other writer, whom he names, is too little so: but he gives Parnell as a standard author between the two extremes. This distinction is truly ridiculous, and worthy of a critic of the French school, for it has unluckily been discovered that Pope improved the language of almost every line of Parnell, so that he is almost as much the author of Parnell's poems as Parnell himself.

By

By refinement here I mean a manner of writing more pure, and of more exquisite figures, than the run of even good composition. Milton's poetry is almost universally such, but far less equally than that of Gray; who uses not a single word without a due value being stamped on it. This is classic refinement, in which not one word, one syllable, is superfluous or improper.

POPE's works are superabundant with superfluous and unmeaning verbage; his translations are even replete with tautology, a fault which is to refinement as midnight is to noon day. What is truly surprizing is, that the fourth book of the Dunciad, his last publication, is more full of redundancy and incorrectness than his Pastorals, which are his first.

BUT of any works which have obtained considerable applause, Thomson's poem of The Seasons is the most incorrect. Any reader who understands grammar and classic composition, is disgusted in every page of that poem by faults, which, tho in themselves minute, yet to a refined eye hide and obscure every beauty

beauty however great, as a very small intervening object will intercept the view of the sun. This reason makes me very much suspect the fame of the Seasons will not be of long existence; for I know of no work that has inherited long reputation which is deficient in style, as the Seasons undoubtedly are to a most remarkable degree. The fact is, that the poem on which the future celebrity of Thomson will be founded is, by a strange fatality, almost totally neglected at this day. That is, his *Castle of Indolence*: a poem which has higher beauties than the Seasons, without any of the faults which disgrace that work; tho the conclusion even of this is most absurd, and unhappy; and could never have occurred to a writer of taste except in a frightful dream.

By the bye, Mr. Gray has closely imitated a stanza, or two, of the *Castle of Indolence*, in his *Elegy*; as you will judge from comparing the exquisite description of the manner in which the poet is supposed to pass his time,

Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn, &c.

F

with

with these lines of Thomson not less exquisite:

Of all the gentle tenants of the place
 There was a man of special grave remark;
 A certain tender gloom o'erspread his face,
 Pensive not sad, in thought involv'd not dark.
 As sweet this man could sing as morning lark;
 And teach the noblest morals of the heart;
 But these his talents were yburied stark:
 Of the fine stores he nothing would impart
 Which or boon Nature gave, or nature-painting Art.

*To noontide shades incontinent he ran,
 Where purls the brook with sleep inviting sound;
 Or when Dan Sol to slope his wheels began,
 Amid the broom he bask'd him on the ground,
 Where the wild thyme and camomoil are found.
 There would he linger till the latest ray
 Of light fate trembling on the welkin's bound:
 Then homeward thro the twilight shadows stray,
 Sauntering and slow: so had he passed many a day.*

WHEN I speak of refinement as a perfection of writing, you must observe I by no means recommend an affected and foolish refinement; such as that of the Spanish poets, than which the most gross want of correctness is more allowable. The refinement I would applaud is such as is truly classic; such as we admire in
 the

the superior Greek and Roman authors ; such a refinement as is perfectly compatible with an elegant simplicity : for you must observe, my friend, that the simplicity of the ancients is a refined simplicity. The purity of their language, and that of every good writer, resembles that of wine, which requires labour and time to effect ; not that of water, which is common and of no price.

L E T T E R XII.

AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS informs us of an observation, which Hormisdas, a prince of Persia, made on Rome; and which is something remarkable, namely, ‘ That one thing only had there pleased him, to find that men died at Rome as well as elsewhere.’

MR. GIBBON in his History has told us to read *displicuisse* for *placuisse*, *displeased* for *pleased*; a correction to which those of Bentley are innocent. He says the contrary sense would be that of a misanthrope; whereas his affords a reproof of Roman vanity.

THE sense that strikes me is very different from either of these; and is this, that the prince’s envy at the pleasures of the inhabitants of Rome could only be moderated by the reflection that their pleasures were transitory.

How would the miserable envy the happy, were not the grave the equal termination of pleasure and of pain!

L E T T E R XIII.

YOUR character of our deceased friend is undoubtedly just. The goodness of his heart atoned even for the prejudices and caprice of his head.

For what defects will not benevolence atone? Is not that virtue superior to every qualification? Must not genius itself 'hide its 'diminished head' before the superior splendor of humble and uncelebrated worth?

How contemptible do the brightest pursuits of fame appear when opposed to the modest merit of doing good to mankind! How much sweeter are the soft whispers of gratitude than the loudest plaudits of popular praise!

THERE is not surely a consideration that can be more productive of contempt of fame in a virtuous mind, than this, that the mad-man who ravages kingdoms, and puts whole nations to the sword, is looked on as a deity ; while he who rewards industry, and relieves distress, lives without renown, and dies without pity.

To real goodness, my friend, even the praise of real and innocent greatness, which is that of the mind, must yield : for there is certainly more genuine merit in doing one good action than in writing an Iliad.

L E T T E R

LETTER XIV.

AN opinion that is opposite to virtue is always opposite to truth. This maxim, which, tho expressed in few words, is the fruit of much observation, I have in no case found more applicable than in that most absurd popular error, that extravagance, and inattention to œconomy, always accompany geniùs.

WE all flatter ourselves, in our youth especially, that we are posselt of that non-descript jewel called genius. Indeed, if the term genius have so extensive a meaning as to imply capacity in general, or *capability*, as Brown the celebrated layer-out of grounds used the phrase, we cannot deny that every one has genius of one kind or another. A man may, if you will, have a very fine genius for stupidity: a sort of genius, which, tho I have not observed to be mentioned in any treatise on the subject, is yet at this day the most lucrative species of genius one can be posselt of.

GENIUS is in my estimation a word of ineffable reverence. The Gnostic *Abraxas* itself is not to be weighed with it. Sometimes one man of genius rises in the space of one thousand years only: sometimes, indeed, when nature is unusually rich, three or four will appear in one country in the course of a century; as was the case when Bacon, Cromwell, Milton, *W. and* Newton, illuminated England together, or at short successions. But now, good heaven! every man, every woman, every child, has genius. I will venture to prophesy that, in the year 1883, from a natural progression of the word, genius will imply folly. The fact is, I have met with no man who in describing genius did not tacitly paint himself.

BUT, to discuss the opinion mentioned in the beginning of this letter, we shall, for the present, consider genius in the popular sense, as merely opposed to want of capacity for any art or science; and allow that middling quality which we imply, when we call a person, or a work, *ingenious*, to fall under the grand class of GENIUS. Even allowing this, we must still, to form a proper judgment, reason from the
most

most high and perfect form in which genius appears; as a chemist would not, I imagine, display the specific gravity of gold from that which is beat out to an inconceivable thinness and exility for gilding, but from a solid mass of that metal.

If we examine therefore the conduct of such men as all the world allows to have been endued with superlative genius, we shall perceive that, so far from being universally cursed with inattention to œconomy, we shall perhaps not find one example of want of that virtue among them. Of Homer we know nothing certain; and to build arguments upon fable is to write on sand. Pindar, tho' extravagance itself in his writings, yet was prudent enough to acquire great wealth by the sale of them; and, what is more, to keep that wealth and use it with discretion. A French writer has wittily put it as the strongest proof of Pindar's genius, that he sold his writings well to those who could not understand a line of them.

Pindare

Pindare etoit homme d'esprit,
 En faut il d'autres temoignages ?
 Profond dans tout ce qu'il ecrit ;
 Pindare etoit homme d'esprit :
 A qui jamais rien n'y comprit
 Il fut bien vendre ses ouvrages ;
 Pindare etoit homme d'esprit,
 En faut il d'autres temoignages ?

Anacreon's luxury, the ancients agree, lay more in his writings than in his life. In short, of all the Greek poets I remember none who is branded with extravagance ; much less any of their historians or philosophers.

AMONG the Romans, with whom it may be questioned if literary or scientific genius ever existed, as I remember few writers in the Latin tongue who are original, or who, in other words, had a superlative genius ; yet we shall find that their *ingenious men*, if you will, laboured under no stain of dissipation. To mention their first-rate writers, Tacitus and others, as men who paid the strictest attention to propriety, were superfluous. Catullus, one of their most licentious poets, was yet no debauchee in his life, if we may judge from his own deposition ;

Nam

Nam castum esse decet, pium poetam,
Ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est.

A sentence that surely would not have dropt from his pen, did his own manners contradict it; as we may always observe that writers adapt their words to their actions, not their actions to their words,

If we come now to our own country, we shall find that genius has always been attended with œconomy. Chaucer acquired wealth by his genius, and left it perfect to his heirs: so did Shakspeare. Bacon, it must be confessed, may be urged on the other side of the question; but the dissipation of his wealth was owing to no habit of extravagance on his part; but to his indulgence to his servants, and to absence of mind. Milton, out of his shattered fortune, found means from strict œconomy to leave a comfortable subsistence to his wife and family. Newton's decency of life is well known. To conclude with Pope, who indeed can only rank with *ingenious men*, he amassed a considerable fortune; which he used with the strictest œconomy, and propriety. A conduct which however does not atone for his always mentioning,
in

in his poems, poverty as matter of reproach to others, and thus eternally blaspheming the Providence that had made him rich.

THIS leads me to observe, by the bye, the falsity of another popular opinion, which is, that poetry and poverty are as nearly related in fact, as in sound. 'As poor as a poet' is almost a proverb, and took its rise from the itinerant minstrels, who, in former times, were poets by real profession or by trade. But few seem to know that no bard of classic days has reached us whom we do not know to have been moderately rich, except Homer; who, for aught certain, may have been a petty king just as likely as a beggar: and that modern times afford no real poets who were poor, except Spenser and Tasso. Even with regard to the first of these, we have no proof; and the poverty of the latter was that of a man of high birth, not of a mendicant.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

I DO not wonder that your search after Bishop Hall's Satires has failed of success; for perhaps there are few books in the language which are more uncommon. After reading that Pope, upon their being shewn him, when he was far advanced in life, expressed great applause of them; and much regret that he had not chanced to see them sooner; I do not wonder at your eagerness on this head: which in some measure to gratify, I send you extracts of his most shining passages.

THE work opens with a kind of poetical preface, called A Defiance to Envy: the three first lines of which are much in the spirit of our author's great cotemporary, Shakspeare.

Nay let the prouder pines of Ida feare
The sudden fires of heaven, and decline
Their yielding tops, that dared the skies whilere.

This

This couplet, in the Prologue to the First Book, is strong,

Whence damned vice is shrouded quite from shame,
And crown'd with virtue's meed, immortal name!

In Satire I. speaking of bad poetry, he says,

Or let it never live, or timely die.

In which, and many of the lines after quoted, you will be surprized to find a smoothness and strength not unworthy of Pope.

Now tofs they bowls of Bacchus' boiling blood.

Sat. II.

Bacchus' boiling blood were in the mouth of an ancient Greek, or Roman, writer, an exquisite phrase for *wine*; but you know I declare war against the whole crew of heathen deities in modern verse.

THE following lines in Sat. IV. are worthy of Horace.

Painters and poets hold your auncient right;
Write what you will, and write not what you might.
Their limits be their list; their reason, will;
But if some painter, in presuming skill,
Should paint the stars in center of the earth,
Could ye forbear some smiles, and taunting mirth?

In

In this couplet of Sat. VI. there seems even an attempt to make the sound correspond with the sense :

The nimble dactyl striving to outgo
The drawling spondees pacing it below.

In Sat. VII. shewing the folly of publishing verses on a mistress designed for a wife, he wittily exclaims,

Fond Wit-wal, that wouldst load thy witlefs head
With timely horns before thy bridal bed !

Satire VIII. I transcribe entire for the sake of its fine vein of irony. It is against some miserable poem called St. Peter's Complaint, written by a Robert Southwell.

Hence ye profane : mell not with holy things,
That Sion's muse from Palestina brings.
Parnassus is transform'd to Sion hill ;
And iv'ry palms her steep ascents done fill.
Now good St. Peter weeps pure Helicon ;
And both the Marias make a music moan :
Yea and the prophet of the heavenly lyre,
Great Solomon, sings in the English quire ;
And is become a new-found sonnatist ;
Singing his love, the holy spouse of Christ ;
Like as she were some light-skirts of the rest,
In mightiest inkhornisms he can thither wrest.

Ye

Ye Sion muses shall, by my dear will,
 For this your zeal, and far-admired skill,
 Be straight transported from Jerusalem :
 Unto the holy house of Bethlehem.

• Mightiest inkhornisms' is a phrase of much felicity to express that sort of writing in which ink alone is expended.

THIS couplet of the last Satire of this First Book is again much in Pope's manner:

But arts of whoring, stories of the stews,
 Ye Muses will ye hear and may refuse?

Of Sat. II. Book II. these lines are fine:

Fond fool! six feet shall serve for all thy store;
 And he that cares for most shall find no more.

I believe the last line of these in Sat. III. is imitated by Milton:

Each homebred science percheth in the chaire;
 While sacred arts grovell on the groundsell bare.

Sat. VI. of this book, its merit and its brevity will justify my transcribing entire.

A gentle squire would gladly entertaine
 Into his house some trencher-chaplain:
 Some willing man that might instruct his sons;
 And that would stand to good conditions.

First

First that he lye upon the truckle-bed,
 Whiles his young maister lieth o'er his head;
 Second, that he do, on no default,
 Ever presume to sit above the salt:
 Third, that he never change his trencher twise:
 Fourth, that he use all common courtesies,
 Sit bare at meales, and one halfe rise and wait:
 Last, that he never his yong maister beat,
 But he must aske his mother to define
 How manie jerkes she would his breech should line:
 All these observed, he could contented bee
 To give five markes, and winter liverie.

In Sat. I. Book III. this couplet on the savage state of man is in the picturesque style of Lucretius:

Could no unhusked akorne leave the tree,
 But there was challenge made, whose it might be.

This couplet of Sat. II. is divine, and a perfect specimen of the moral sublime.

Thy monument make thou thy living deeds;
 No other tomb than that true virtue needs.

In Sat. III. ridiculing a citizen's pompous feast, he concludes:

For whom he meanes to make an often guest
 One dish shall serve:—and welcome make the rest.

These lines, in contempt of ostentatious charity, are excellent.

Who ever gives a paire of velvet shooes
To th' Holy Rood; or liberally allowes
But a new rope to ring the curfew bell;
But he desires that his great deed may dwell,
Or graven in the chancel-window-glass,
Or in the lasting tombe of plated brasse?

This ludicrous description in Satire V. must not be passed over.

Late travelling along in London way,
Mee met, as seem'd by his disguis'd array,
A lusty courtier, whose curled head
With abron locks was fairely furnished.
I him saluted in our lavish wise;
He answeres my untimely courtesies:
His bonnet vail'd, ere ever he could thinke,
Th' unruly winde blowes off his periwinke.
He lights, and runs, and quickly hath him sped
To overtake his over-running head, &c.

It is with regret I observe, that Satire VI. of this Third Book is foolish and absurd to the most contemptible degree, and totally unworthy of the author: it ought, in justice to all the rest, to be struck out of every future edition, in which the fame of the author is at all consulted.

Of Sat. II. Book IV. these lines have no small merit.

Let sweet-mouth'd Mercia bid what crowns she please
 For half-red cherries, or green garden pease,
 Or the first artichokes of all the yeare;
 To make so lavish cost for little cheare:
 When Lolio feasteth in his revelling fit,
 Some starved pullen scoures the rusted spit.
 For else how should his son maintained be
 At inns of court or of the chancery;
 There to learn law and courtly carriage,
 To make amends for his mean parentage;
 Where he unknowne and ruffling as he can
 Goes currant each where for a gentleman?

In the same Satire, speaking of a bankrupt, he says,

That hath been long in shady shelter pent,
 Imprisoned for feare of prisonment.

The last of the thoughts in this quatrain has genuine wit:

Whose mention were alike to thee as lieve,
 As a catch-poll's fist unto a bankrupt's sleeve:
 Or an *hos ego* from old Petrarch's spright
 Unto a plagiary sonnet-wright.

These verses of the same Satire are excellent :

How I foresee, in many ages past,
Where Lohio's caytive name is quite defac'd;
Thine heir, thine heir's heir, and his heir again
From out the loynes of careful Lolian,
Shall climb up to the chancel pewes on high,
And rule and raigne in their rich tenancy.
When perch'd aloft, to perfect their estate,
They rack their rents unto a treble rate;
And hedge in all the neighbour common lands,
And clodge their slavish tenants with commands.
Whiles they poor souls with feeling sigh complaine;
And wish old Lohio were alive againe:
And praise his gentle soule, and wish it well,
And of his friendly facts full often tell.

Afterwards, speaking of the proud heir's purchasing a pedigree, and arms, of the herald, he wittily advises him to take for the latter

The Scottish barnacle, if I might choose,
That of a worme doth waxe a winged goose.

These characters in Sat. III. are very well.

Ventrous Fortunio his farm hath sold,
And gads to Guiane-land, to fish for gold;
Meeting, perhaps, if Orenoque deny,
Some straggling pinnace of Polonian rye.

Then comes home floating with a silken sail,
 That Severne shakerh with his cannon peal.
 Wiser Raymundus, in his closet pent,
 Laughs at such danger and aventurement.
 When half his lands are spent in golden smoke,
 And now his second hopeful glasse is broke;
 But yet if haply his third furnace hold
 Devoteth all his pots and pans to gold.

I know of no classic writer to whom the above
 lines would not do honour.

This stroke in the same Satire is truly in the
 arch style of Horace:

Florian the fire did women love alive;
 And so his sonne doth too, all but his wife.

Of Satire IV. take this specimen:

Hye wanton Gallio, and wed betime;
 Why should'st thou leese the pleasures of thy prime?
 Seest thou the rose-leaves fall ungathered!
 Then hye thee, wanton Gallio, to wed:
 Let ring and ferule meet upon thine hand,
 And Lucine's girdle with her swathing-band.
 Hye thee, and give the world yet one dwarfe more,
 Such as it got when thou thyselfe wast bore.
 Look not for warning of thy bloomed chin:—
 Can ever happineffe too soon begin?

The following strokes of Sat. VII. are admirable. I must premise, however, that *Aquine* here means Juvenal, who was of Aquinum; not Thomas Aquinas, as one might imagine from this very ill-imagined patronymic.

When once I thinke, if carping Aquine's spright
 To see now Rome were licenc'd to the light,
 How his enraged ghost would stamp and stare
 That Cæsar's throne is turn'd to Peter's chayre!
 To see an old-shorn lozell perched high,
 Crossing beneath a golden canopy,
 The whiles a thousand hairlesse crownes crouch low,
 To kisse the precious case of his proud toe;
 And for the lordly fasces, borne of old,
 To see two quiet crossed keys of gold;
 Or Cybele's shrine, the famous Pantheon's frame,
 Turn'd to the honour of our lady's name.
 But that he most would gaze, and wonder at,
 Is th' horned mitre, and the bloody hat;
 The crooked staffe, their coule's strange form and
 store,
 Save that he saw the same in hell before.

Virgil's *varium et mutabile semper fœmina* has been much applauded: the following fly insinuation I think exceeds it.

Was ever feather, or fond woman's mind,
 More light than words? the blasts of idle wind!

Sat. I. B. V.

These

These lines of the same Satire deserve selection.

Would it not vex thee, where thy fires did keep,
To see the dunged folds of dog-tayl'd sheep?
And ruin'd house, where holy things were said,
Whose freestone walls the thatched rooffe upbraid.
Whose shrill saints-bell hangs on his levery,
While the rest are damned to the plumbery?
Yet pure devotion lets the steeple stand,
And idle battlements on either hand,
Lest that perhaps, were all these relicks gone,
Furius his sacrilege could not be knowne.

The following lines of the next Satire are exceedingly well.

Look to the tow'red chimnies, which should be
The wind pipes of good hospitality;
Through which it breatheth to the open aire
Betokening life and liberal welfare:
Lo! there th' unthankful swallow takes her rest,
And fills the tunnel with her circled nest.

In the same Satire *the black prince* is an unhappy appellation of *Pluto*, as that name is almost appropriated to one of the greatest of English heroes.

The beginning of Sat. III. is fortunate.

The satire should be like the porcupine,
That shoots sharp quills out in each angry line;

And wounds the blushing cheek, and fiery eye,
 Of him that hears and readeth guiltily.
 Ye antique satires, how I blesse your dayes,
 That brook'd your bolder stile—their own dispraise;
 And well near wish, yet joy my wish is vaine,
 I had been then, or they been now againe!

In the first couplet above quoted, however, a simile is confounded with a metaphor.

The following allusions are not unlucky:

Yet certes Mœcha is a Platonist,
 To all, they say, but who so do not list;
 Because her husband, a far traffick'd man,
 Is a profest Peripatetician.

In Book VI, and last, which consists of only one Satire, speaking of a factor, who knows he is in his lord's last will, and of his pretended grief at the sickness of his patron, he proceeds;

Then turns his back, and smiles and looks askance,
 Seas'ning again his sorrow'd countenance.
 Whiles yet he wearies heaven with daily cries,
 And backward death with devout sacrifice;
 That they would now his tedious ghost bereav'n;
 And wishes well, that wish'd no worse than heav'n,

There is a curious mixture of the manner of Shakspeare, and Pope, in the above quotation; and in the following there is as curious an anticipation,

Go,

Go, Ariost, and gape for what may fall
 From trencher of a flattering cardinal ;
 And if thou gettest but a pedant's fee,
 Thy bed, thy board, and coarser livery ;
 O honour far beyond a brazen shrine,
 To sit with Tarleton on an ale-post's signe !

The following ridicule of the then fashionable style of writing shews, that our author's taste was as just as his composition is excellent.

He knows the grace of that new elegance,
 Which sweet Philicides fetch'd of late from France ;
 That well befeem'd his high-stil'd Arcady
 Tho others marr'd it with much liberty.
 In epithetes to joine two wordes in one ;
 Forsooth for adjectives can't stand alone.
 As a great poet could of Bacchus say,
 That he was Semele-femori-gena.

The following stroke upon false descriptions of beauty is witty.

Another thinks her teeth might liken'd be
 To two faire rankes of pales of ivory ;
 To fence in fure the wild-beast of her tongue
 From either going far or going wrong.

I shall

I shall conclude with observing, that no poet in our language has had so little justice done him as the writer of these Satires. It must be owned, that in reading satire we expect to find real characters, which are here wanting, every attempt of this kind being the evident product of the author's invention only; and it must likewise be confessed, that the whole work smells more of the scholar, than of the man of the world. To compensate these small faults, this volume displays a correctness and manliness of thought, that for the age of conceits in which it was published are quite wonderful; and, in general, a beauty and harmony of versification that leave little to wish. Were my suffrage of any weight, Bishop Hall should instantly burst from the cloud which still envelops him; and, like another Æneas, receive at once the honour due to his merit.

L E T T E R

LETTER XVI.

YOU wonder at my assertion on a former occasion *, that Virgil has not the most distant pretence to any attribute of a poet, except that of a fine style. To vindicate my opinion from the charge of rashness, I now submit to you my reasons. It is indeed dangerous to attack the reputation of a good writer, as I allow Virgil to be, in any respect; for if your assault is not supported by a strong host of arguments, it will recoil upon yourself. But, as I know your liberality of sentiment too well, to fear your pronouncing hastily upon an opinion, merely because it controverts your ideas, or those of the world at large, I shall lay what I call my proofs before you without hesitation.

* Letter IX.

It is agreed by all the critics, that genius, known by invention, as a cause from its effect, is the very first power and praise of a poet. I believe, however, the most sanguine admirer of Virgil will allow, that not one ray of invention appears thro his whole works. His Eclogues, considered as works of invention, are beneath all contempt. Where he has not followed the tract of Theocritus, he has wandered into childish absurdity: witness the Pollio; in which, because some senator's wife was brought to bed of a chopping boy, he prophesies the golden age will return. I know some Christian writers have applied this prophetic eclogue to an higher event—but I see you smile in contempt;—and I pass the dreams of fanaticism. Witness the Sixth Eclogue, into which a system of philosophy has crept by some strange back-door or other. A critic in the *Adventurer* has pronounced all the Pastorals of Virgil exceptionable, except the First and Tenth: now in these there is no invention, both of them, as that critic allows, deriving their superiority from their being founded on real events. I conclude, therefore, that Virgil is, in his Pastorals, no poet, but merely an excellent versifier.

If

If we proceed to the *Georgics*, we shall find as few marks of genius in them as in the *Pastorals*, in spite of the blind admiration which has been paid that poem. The subject is confessedly unhappy : for Virgil in this was the imitator of Hesiod, as in his *Pastorals* of Theocritus, and in his *Æneid* of Homer.

O imitatores servum pecus !

was the just exclamation of his more ingenious cotemporary, Horace. How blind, my friend, must those be who could not infer, if this remark be just, how little is Virgil ! Virgil, whose whole fame rests upon three specimens of imitation !

To examine the *Georgics* by the criterion of invention, which is that of genius and true poetry, we must confess, that in a didactic poem, the precepts are quite out of the province of invention ; and for this reason the didactic is the lowest of all the kinds of poetry. But the *Georgics* are allowed to be Virgil's chief work : the work on which his fame principally rests ; tho he afterwards aspired to be an epic writer, (what an epic writer !) and it follows, that, at the most, Virgil is but an excel-

excellent didactic writer, even in the opinion of his most sanguine admirers: that is, if you please, we will grant for a moment that he stands first in the very meanest rank of poetry: surely no high praise.

WHERE is his fame as a poet, if it is proved that even this praise, slender as it is, is yet infinitely too high for him? Yet this will be easily proved to those whose minds are not secured from the light of truth by the impenetrable shades of prejudice.

A DIDACTIVE poem must be written in such a style as to be understood by those to whom it is addressed. If painting, for example, is the subject, the language ought to be such as may be understood by any painter of common intelligence. This rule, universally just as it is, must always be followed; else the absurdity were as great as if a country curate should preach to his staring parishioners in Hebrew, and expect they should follow precepts which it was impossible they should understand. Common sense, my friend, which is so uncommon a thing among the critics, and yet which enables
any

any man to judge better of writing than all the capricious dictates of criticism, teaches us that the necessity of following this rule is indispensable. Yet it has not been followed by Virgil, who writes to country farmers in a most elaborate, and to them impenetrably obscure, style. Who can help smiling to see him constantly addressing himself to people, who, as he well knew, could not possibly understand him? Yet he is called the judicious Virgil, by those who can see very near as far as their noses, with the help of a borrowed lanthorn!

Why dwell on particular absurdities of a production, which, in its very essence, is absurdity itself? Yet we must not pass the Episodes and ornaments of the Georgics, which have been hitherto allowed the very brightest proofs Virgil has given of genius or invention. Let us weigh these proofs, if possible, in the very scales which critical Justice holds.

THE invocation to Cæsar's spirit, the spirit of a tyrant, who trampled on the liberties of his country, could never have been written by a poet of real genius; for invincible honesty of
mind

mind has always been its attendant. Fulsome flattery and adulation, unworthy of the soul of a slave, constitute the merits of Virgil, in this admired address. May execration pursue his memory, who has placed a crown on the brows of a tyrant, that were much too bright for the best of kings! The signs preceding the death of Julius, enumerated in the end of the book, are in the same style with the address; superstitious offerings on the altar of slavery. They who find invention in either of these ornaments, are welcome to feed on it, mixed up with a little whipt cream.

I ALLOW it were prejudice alone that could induce a reader to deny the beauty of the panegyric on a country life, which closes the Second Book; but at the same time it may be safely said, that there are no marks in it of a superlative poet. Of invention there are surely none, nor of originality; for the theme has been, in all ages of poetry, a trite one. Virgil in this passage, therefore, as in others, only displays great skill in the mechanical part of poetry, but leaves the praise of a great poet to happier rivals.

THE

THE description of the plague, in the end of the Third Book, is evidently in imitation of Lucretius, only more full and rich. But *facile est inventis addere*; and this Episode may give Virgil the fame of a happy imitator, but never that of a true poet.

THE story of Aristæus in the last Book displays not the powers of Ovid, tho superior in chastity of versification. But who ever said Ovid was a poet?

I TRUST it will appear from this deduction, that Virgil has not in his Pastorals, nor in his Georgics, given any proofs of genius, invention, or that which properly constitutes a poet.

THE Æneid shall, if you like the subject, be examined some future opportunity; and will, I know, add still less renown to Virgil as a creator.

YET Virgil deserves all his fame: a paradox, you will say, worthy of Rousseau.

L E T T E R : XVII.

YOUR observation, that there is a fatality which attends the reputation of authors, as well as other human affairs, is undoubtedly just. How else shall we account for Milton's immortal poem lingering so slowly into fame, while the most vapid productions of some of his cotemporaries acquired an instant celebrity, as wide as it was ill-founded?

DUBOS has given us a curious theory of the manner in which works of merit attain their due reputation. His reflections, like those of other French critics, are specious without value, and massy without solidity. Let us strike against them : perhaps the truth will fly out.

‘ New productions,’ says he, ‘ are at first appreciated by judges of very different characters ; people of the trade, and the public. They would be very soon estimated at their
‘ just

* just value, if the public was as capable of
 * defending its opinion, and making it weigh
 * properly, as it knows how to take the just
 * side. But it has the easiness to allow its judg-
 * ment to be embarrassed by persons who pro-
 * fess the art to which the new production be-
 * longs. These persons are often apt to make
 * a false report, for reasons which we will ex-
 * plain. They obscure the truth in such a
 * manner, that the public remains for some
 * time in uncertainty, or in error. It does not
 * know precisely what title the new work me-
 * rits. The public remains undecided on the
 * question, if it is good, or bad, on the whole :
 * and it even sometimes believes people of the
 * profession, who deceive it ; but it only be-
 * lieves them for a very short time.

* THAT first period being elapsed, the public
 * appreciates a work at its just value; and gives
 * it the rank which it deserves, or condemns it
 * to utter oblivion. It is never deceived, be-
 * cause it judges disinterestedly, and because it
 * judges by sentiment.

SUCH are the reflections of the Abbé du Bos, whom I will readily allow to be the most judicious of the French critics, if that is any praise. Truth is against them. Let us examine their justice by an illustrious instance.

PARADISE LOST was sold by John Milton to his bookseller on the twenty-seventh day of April 1667, during the witty and ingenious reign of Charles II. when Dryden was at the head of poetry and criticism. Did it instantly astonish the world as if a new sun had arisen? No. Three years passed, changes of titles, and other bookfelling arts, were employed ere a small impression could be sold, tho not one of the trade of poetry perplexed the public opinion. Dryden, who was at the head of that trade, was the first to perceive and to applaud its beauties. Criticism was the general pursuit of that age, which was fully as enlightened on that head as the present. What happened then would have happened now: in the year 1767 Milton's divine poem would have met exactly the same reception as in 1667. And why? The answer is evident: the work was in a style of poetry above the popular conception; and

and the judgment of true judges, tho it always prevails, yet prevails with as much flowness as certainty.

IN this lies the grand mistake of du Bos. He supposes the public judges for itself: it is always led by peculiar opinions, and the rectitude of its sentiments depends entirely upon the superiority of its leaders being founded in truth, or merely in fashion. By *the public*, I understand with him, people of some knowledge and some reading. A man who reads for his amusement books in his own language, and can talk a little on what he reads, may afford a kind of abstract idea of what is meant by *the public*. Now I will venture to compute from real observation, that not 99 out of 100, who pretend to admire Milton, are capable of understanding that writer. Why then has he a place in their libraries? Because he is mentioned with high applause by writers of reputation.

HAD not Addison written his superficial criticism on Milton, which is indeed adapted to the meanest capacity, other men of learning

would have brought him into vogue: for a superior poet is always the poet of the learned, before he is that of the public at large.

WITNESS the Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, the exquisite productions of the same author; which remained a feast for the learned alone, for near a century after their publication. They were published in 1645, and were taken no notice of. The Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, were taken no notice of at a period when we sometimes find *the tenth edition* upon masses of metrical nonsense that are now unknown to have existed! Let the public after this judge for itself. A second edition of these divine poems did not appear till 1673; and even then they were not republished, because they were called for, but because they made a sizeable volume with his Paradise Regained, then first published.

WHAT is the reason of such poems falling into silence? Is it not because those learned men who happened to see and admire them had no opportunity of recommending them to public notice?

AT

AT the same time it must be observed, that it is the impartial, uninfluenced, opinion of men of learning, that commands the public judgement; not that of such men of learning as are friends of the author: for such decisions the public, however highly it may rate the abilities of him who pronounces them, yet has always discernment enough to set aside.

SELDOM does it even happen, that the opinion of cotemporary men of learning influences the public: which is the reason that the works of any living writer are very seldom justly appreciated. Yet it may so happen that a writer, from a happy circumstance, may acquire a reputation as just as it is instantaneous. This was the case with the late Mr. Gray, who by his happening to be conversant in fashionable company, gained a complete century in point of reputation. For, tho fashionable writers are most justly set in opposition to good, the very epithet implying that their works will not last; yet fashion is now and then in the right, as well as other fools.

It is above observed, that the opinion of cotemporary judges, decides not that of the public. The truth is, there are works of superlative merit, of which the most learned cotemporary can form no true estimate; for works of uncommon excellence require to be viewed at a certain distance, and in a certain light, to have their due effect. Set a picture of Raphael's against the blaze of the noonday sun, and its beauties will be as little discerned as at midnight. Let me add, that an eminent writer is seldom the writer of his own times: his mature mind precedes the advancement of his art and language very often by a full century: so that one hundred years, and sometimes more, must elapse, ere the public has acquired intelligence enough to judge of him.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

AS I know your admiration of Shakspeare, and your fondness for any new remarks illustrative of the works of that wonderful poet, I shall make no apology for laying before you such observations as have occurred to me, in reading the last edition of his Plays 1778. I shall follow the order of volume and page, as in that edition; and must beg leave, in commenting upon Shakspeare, likewise to comment upon his commentators.

Vol. I. p. 39. TEMPEST. Upon this line,
Thy nerves are in their infancy again,
is this note: "So Milton in his Masque at
Ludlow castle,

Thy nerves are all bound up in alabaster."

WHAT in the name of wonder has this quotation to do with the line in the text? It might as well have been noted,

"So Milton in his Sonnets,

A book was writ of late call'd Tetrachordon."

Most

Most of the notes of this writer begin with *So*, let it be pertinent or not; which gave a wag occasion to observe, that all his notes were *so, so*.

P. 269. MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR. I approve of the reading “Will you go on, heris?” Warburton, with his usual rashness of half knowledge, calls *beris* an old Scottish word for master. It is the plural of *bere*, an old Scottish word for master or lord, from the Latin *berus*. Bishop Douglas often uses it in his translation of Virgil:

Hyarbas king and other heris all.

Book IV.

The heres war wount togydder fit alfame,

B. VII.

Bayth commoun pepyl and the heris bald.

B. IX.

and elsewhere in the singular,

The kyng hymself Latinus the great here.

B. XII.

Over the grete logeings of sum mighty here.

B. XII.

Vol.

Vol. II. p. 257. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

THIS alludes to the ancient practice of chivalry, of the young warriors vowing a mutual friendship and aid of each other. Such were called *brothers at arms*. This custom existed in France so late as the close of the last century: witness this passage in the Letters of Madame de Sevigné: “J’estime fort Barban-
“tanne: c’est un des plus braves hommes du
“monde, d’une valeur presque romanesque
“d’ont j’ai oui parler mille fois a Buffi; *ils*
“*sont freres d’armes.*” Tome II. See more in M. Du Cange’s Dissertation, annexed to Joinville, *Des freres d’armes*; and St. Palaye, Notes sur la III^{me} Partie de ses Mem. sur l’ancienne Chevalerie.

P. 328. An two men ride of a horse one must ride behind.

THE note on this passage, informing us that Shakspeare may have caught this idea from the common seal of the Knights Templars, the device of which was *two riding upon one horse*, is truly in the spirit of a man who has lost his

W. de la ...

W. de la ...

own ideas in the pursuit of those of antiquity : for the sentence in the text, which seems proverbial, must have arisen to the meanest peasant from an object almost every day before his eyes.

P. 356. What courage, man ! What tho care killed a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

This seems to allude to an old song, beginning

Some say that care kill'd a cat ;
It starv'd her and made her to die.
But I shall be wiser than that ;
For the devil a care have I.

By *care's killing a cat*, the very destructive power of care is intended to be shewn ; a cat being vulgarly said to have nine lives.

P. 425. LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST. Upon this couplet,

When for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,
We bend to that the working of the heart,

is this wonderful note, which I need not tell you is by Warburton. “ The harmony of the
“ measure, the easiness of the expression, and
“ the good sense in the thought, all concur to
“ recommend these two lines to the reader's
“ notice.”

“notice.” The lines will, I doubt not, strike you, and every man of common sense, not to say common taste, as utterly destitute of every quality this apostolical alchymist recommends; who in his dreams tries to convert the very dirt of Shakspeare into gold. The preservation of such nonsensical comments much arraigns the taste of his *variorum* editors.

P. 498. “Some slighty *zany*.” *Zany* is from the Italian *zanni*, which is from the Latin *san-nio*, a buffoon. *Zanni* was the name appropriated by the Italian comedy to Scapin, and to Harlequin; from the malicious buffoonery of these characters. Hence a *zany*, a fool, a fellow of trifling malice. The Dictionary Della Crusca, *Zannata*, cosa da Zanni; cosa frivola. See Riccoboni Histoire du Theatre Italien.

Vol. III. p. 30. MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.
 “The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale.”
 The note on this passage, informing us that *wisest aunt* here means *the most sentimental bawd*, is truly Warburtonian, as the expression taken in its direct sense is much more humorous. Such notes make one sick. We shall
 by

by and bye be informed that, when Hamlet says *Mother*, he means *capital bawd*, because *Mother Needham's* character is well known.

P. 35. Of the information in the note that *fairies were subject to mortality*, I will venture to say there is no evidence in any creed of popular superstition.

P. 56. "Reason becomes the marshal to my will." That is, my will now obeys the command of my reason; not, my will now follows reason. *Marshal* is a director of an army, of a turney, of a feast. *Sidney* has used *marshal* for *herald* or *poursuivant*; but improperly: and the *Arcadia* is certainly no *well of English undefiled*.

P. 62. Of the remark on Snout's speech every reader who is *a man of this world* sees the absurdity. The phrase, "You see an ass's head of your own; do you?" is a trite vulgarism, when a person expresses a foolish amazement at some trifling oddity in another's dress, or the like.

P. 85.

P. 85. "For night's swift dragons cut the
" clouds full fast." The image of dragons
drawing the chariot of night, is derived from
the supposed watchfulness of that fabled ani-
mal; is classic, and as such often used by Mil-
ton. Shakspeare was certainly learned, if learn-
ing consists in reading books, not in studying
languages.

P. 90. "Give me your neif." Neif or
neive is the Scottish word, I am told; to this
day for fist. Skinner derives it from the French
nœud, a knot: more likely from the Cimbrian
kneffe, the fist.

P. 109. The wise note on the words "Our
" sport shall be to take what they mistake,"
is certainly introduced with a bad design upon
the reader's lungs, for nothing is so risible as
perfect absurdity.

P. 115. The whole pitiful comments on
the words "two noble beasts, a man and a
" lyon," should be erased, as doing no credit
to the first of these animals. The text is right,
and of easy interpretation.

P. 119.

P. 119. “And thus she *moans*.” For this alteration we are indebted to Theobald, who did not know that *means*, which formerly stood in the text, was an old English word; and is now a common one in Scottish law, signifying *to tell, to narrate, to declare*. Petitions to the Court of Session in Scotland run, To the Lords of Council and Session, humbly *means* and shews your petitioner, &c.

P. 121. Of the Bergomask dances something may be seen in Riccoboni’s work, above quoted: Harlequin, I believe, was a native of the whimsical country about Bergamo, a city of Lombardy.

MERCHANT OF VENICE, p. 241. “A little “scrubbed boy.” I disagree entirely from the learned annotator on this place, who asserts that from the context, and tenor of the story, Gratiano does not speak contemptuously of Nerissa, when disguised as the Judge’s clerk. In the representation (the surest criterion) it strikes the whole audience that he does: and indeed in his speaking contemptuously of his wife, in her assumed character, to herself in
her

her real one, lies the whole dramatic effect, and *vis comica* of the passage. Understand therefore *scrubbed* in its common sense of derivation from *scrub*, mean fellow.

P. 259. *Leti's* noted story, I have no doubt, is borrowed from some old fable, as the character of that historian is well known, who was another Varillas;—a writer who wrote a kind of low romances, as mob-traps, and called them *Histories*.

P. 281. AS YOU LIKE IT. *Condition* is rightly interpreted disposition. So in Othello *gentle conditions* are *gentle dispositions*. It is a common phrase in the old English writers, “An here
“tyke is no gentleman: for he is a gentilman
“that hath gentyl conditions.” *The Examination of the constant martir of Christ, John Philpot, Archdeacon of Winchester, &c.* London 1559. b. l. fig. A. “For fuche persones rebuked, or
“punished, perchance excusyng theymselfe,
“that they doe it by to ardent affection, and
“desyre to please; or by their youth, and
“lacke of experience; or recognisyng theyr
“folie, and promisyng amandement; may
I “happen

“ happen aftsoones to crepe into favour, and
 “ than they woorke theyr nette so finely, that
 “ it cannot so soone bee perceived, and pitch-
 “ eth it more covertly, applyng it aptely to
 “ *theyr maister's condicions*, so that it shall be
 “ almost impossible for hym to escape, but that
 “ in one meise or other he shall be tangled.”
The Image of Governance, &c. translated by Sir
Thomas Elyote. Anno 1549. folio verso 20.

P. 298. The observation marked (7) is so innocent and chaste, that I dare say every boarding-school girl laughs at it.

P. 303. “ 'Tis a Greek invocation to call
 “ fools into a circle. I'll go sleep if I can; if
 “ I cannot I'll rail against all the first-born of
 “ Egypt.”

THE note here says “ *The first born of Egypt.*]
 “ A proverbial expression for high-born per-
 “ sons.” Who ever heard of such a proverb?
 The meaning is obvious: Jaques says *Due ad*
me is a charm: but if it does not make him
 sleep, he will rail against all the *gyppies* who
 use it. For granting it an invocation, as he
 jeeringly

jeeringly says, the gypsies (the witches and magicians of Shakspeare's days) were the most likely to be the inventors of it, and if it failed of effect, they deserved to be railed at as impostors.

P. 325. The expression of Rosalind, "One inch of delay more is a South sea of discovery," has almost distilled the brains of the annotators, who have been here lost as in a South sea, tho every reader but they saw shore at the first glance. The plain meaning is, "One inch of delay more is a Southsea, in which one may fail far and wide without making any discovery." *Of* is here used instead of *for*, as in many other English phrases. Note 8. Dr. Warburton's explanation of *Good my complexion!* in the same page is just: and indeed the expression was intelligible to the meanest capacity. Peruse, however, the next note to his, and pronounce that modern antiquaries have as little claim to intrinsic science as any of their predecessors.

P. 371. The words, "And you, fair sister," seem to have been inserted by the players, that Oliver might not remain so very long a mute person

person on the stage. In his mouth they are quite absurd, even in the sense of the note signed "Chamier." I strongly suspect the truth is they belong to Orlando; and that Oliver should have his exit, when Orlando says to him, "Go you and prepare Aliena;" for nothing else marks his presence, except these improper words; which, in the mouth of Orlando, are every way proper, especially in the absence of Oliver. Read therefore *meo periculo* (if I may use the Benteian style of emendation) the words *Exit Oliver*, after the words in Orlando's speech, "here comes my Rosalind:" And instead of *Oli.* in the next speech, save one, read *Orla.*

I SHALL here close my observations on the three first volumes of this edition of Shakspeare; which must be allowed to be more pure of faults than any that has yet appeared. If I find these flight notes give you any amusement, they shall be continued on future occasions.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

I BY no means agree with you, that lyric poetry may almost be put among the arts, known to the ancients, but lost to us. Indeed if you consider lyric poetry in its ancient acception only, as WEDDED (to use Milton's strong expression) to music, perhaps the modern may in this view yield to the ancient: tho even this, I believe, might be controverted by those who have heard Dryden's Ode, and Milton's *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, accompanied by the music of Handel. But divesting lyric poetry of its scenic representation, and, considering it solely as the amusement of the closet, I deny that the modern is inferior to the ancient: and indeed the simple perusal or recital is now the only way in which any just parallel can be instituted, as the ancient music is utterly lost.

NOR do I agree with you, that the modern lyric poets of any rank are less numerous than the ancient; and, to support my difference of opinion, submit to you some short account of the former. This I do the more readily, as I know your studies have not been much extended on this subject.

OUR researches on this head shall be confined to the modern lyric poetry of Italy, of France, and of England. The Spanish writers in this line, Lopez de Vega, Gongora, &c. I leave to those who have a soul lofty enough to understand bombast, and grovelling enough to understand nonsense. Those writers who do not know the art of gilding lead, may learn it of the Spanish poets. The works of Uz, the German, I cannot pretend to speak of, as I hope I shall never study High Dutch; but, were they of any value, I doubt not but some of them would have appeared before this in a more intelligible tongue.

To begin then with the Italians, Petrarca shines in the very first rank of honour, as of age. One or two of his Odes or Canzoni have
already

already* been said in a former letter to be excellent; and one excellent ode is as much preferable to a number of middling ones (those of Horace for instance) as a piece of gold is to a number of pieces of silver. His Sonnets I do not consider as lyric, but as elegiac.

Not to speak of Bembo, Casa, or Molza, the odes of Chiabrera have often grand passages, tho he is more commonly a *Seicento*; by which name the Italians understand a writer of the seventeenth century, when a false taste was introduced by Marini, in place of the pure style which had reigned till that time.

SOME of the Anacreontic odes of Menzini are as fine pieces as have been produced in that very delicate and difficult mode of composition.

GUIDI sometimes catches the true lyric spirit, but more often his fire is lost in smoke; so that he frequently reverses the observation of Horace, *non fumum ex fulgore*, &c.

* Letter VII.

Of the works of Fulvio Testi, I must profess much esteem, tho they seem neglected by his countrymen. He appears to have attained the genuine texture of lyric thought and style more than any other Italian poet I know, without exception. His images are frequently very rich and happy. For example might be adduced the whole famous Ode to Montecuculli, which cost the author his life, particularly the beginning :

Ruscelletto orgoglioso,
 Che, ignobil figlio di non chiara fonte,
 Il natal tenebroso
 Avesti intra gl' orror d'ispido monte;
 E già, con lenti passi,
 Povero d'acque, isti lambendo i sassi,
 Non strepitar cotanto ;
 Non gir sì torvo a flagellar la sponda ;
 Chè benche Maggio alquanto
 Di liquefatto gel t'accresca l'onde,
 Sopraverrà ben tosto,
 Eficcator di tue gonfiezze, Agosto,
 Placido in seno a Teti
 Gran re de fiumi il Po discoglie il corso ;
 Ma di velati abeti
 Macchine eccelse ognor sostien su'l dorso ;
 Ne per arsura estiva
 In più breve confin stringe sua riva.

Tu

Tu le greggie, e i pastori,
 Minacciando per via spumi, e ribolli.
 E, di non propri umori
 Possessor momentaneo, il corno estolli.
 Torpido, obliquo; e questo
 Del tuo sol hai; tutto alieno e il resto, &c.

THE Ode to the Duke of Modena, which begins the Second Part of his Poems, intitled, *Opere gloriose di sua Altezza in pace e in guerra*, is likewise very rich and noble. This image in particular may vie with Pindar for magnificence, and Anacreon for beauty:

Certo, irrigata di celesti umori,
 Si vezzosa non suole
 Rider in faccia al sole,
 La reina odorifera de fiori:
 Che piu pregiati assai
 Bella Virtu non sparga odori, e rai.

THE Ode in the First Part, *Al Signor Conte Gio. Battista Ronchi*, exceeds any of Horace for elegant and pathetic morality: witness this stanza.

E noi, s'el tempo irrevocabil fugge,
 Sospirerem, O Ronchi,
 E colmarem d'inutil doglia il cuore?

Ah

Ah no! Cogliam da questi campi il fiore,
 Pria, che tempesta il tronchi;
 O maligno vapor l'arda, e l'adugge.
 Folle chi piu si strugge;
 Il pensar al morir la morte affretta;
 E piu tardi si muor, se men s'aspetta.

THE Ode intitled, *Si detesta l'avaritia delle donne*, is transcendent. Admire the sudden beauty of this transition in it, and the genuine lyric manner of the story.

O de la Gallia invitta
 Non ultimo splendor, Brenno guerriero!
 Io la tua gloria adoro, e il nome inchino,
 Non gia perche sconfitta
 Per te Roma restasse, e'l seme altero
 Quasi spento di Giano, e di Quirino;
 Non perche l'Asia fosse
 Trofeo de le tue posse;
 Ma perche d'empio cor gl' avari eccessi.
 Sapessi anco punir co' doni stessi.

Era lunga stagione,
 Che d'assedio crudel cinte tenea
 L'Efesie mura il capitan feroce;
 Poich' il ferreo montone
 Con gl' urti bellicosi indarno avea
 Dato al muro fedele assalto atroce;

Mà

Mà dubbio era l'evento,
 Che piena d'alto ardimento
 Osava il difensor fin sovra'l vallo
 Salir più volte a provocar il Gallo.

Quando d'aurei monili
 L'armati schiere de Guerrier nemici
 Vide avara Donzella irsen pompose;
 De le spoglie gentili
 Ben tosto avida fatta, i tetti amici
 Patricida crudel tradir dispose.
 Patteggia il prezzo, e guida
 Per la cieco ombra infida
 Il cauto re, dove per strade ascoste
 Ne le mura infelici entrar puo l'oste.

Già d'orror, di singulti,
 Di gemite, e di gridi Efeso è piena,
 Chi cede al vincitor, chi cade esangue:
 Le fiamme indegni insulti
 Fanno a tetti dorati, e per l'arena
 Scorrendo vada mille rivi il sangue,
 Amoroze bellezze,
 Preziose ricchezze,
 Sono Gallici acquisti: In sì brev'ora
 Regni, pompe, tesor Marte divora.

Sol con pupille asciutte
 Stassi colei, de la città mirando
 L'arse reliquie, e i lacerati avanzi:
 Vengon le schiere, e tutte

Sovr'

Sovr' il capo esecrable, e nefando
 Tersan quell'or, che desio pur dianzi;
 Ella, dal peso appressa,
 Ne la mercè promessa
 Trova il gastigo : e, fra le gemme avolta,
 Nel bramato tesor resta sepolta.

I shall conclude with the following fine specimen of another Ode, *Al Signor D. Virginia Cesarini.*

Rimanetevi in pace
 Cittadine grandezze ; Io quì desio
 Chiuder i giorni miei tra l'erbe, e i fiori.
 D'esequie honor fugace
 Non habbia il mio morir, ne'l cener mio
 Beva d'Assiria i lagrimanti odori;
 Ma semplici pastori
 Spargan di latte, ove tra canti, e giochi,
 De la rustica Pale ardonno fuochi.

Da Numidica balza
 Urna superba à fabbricar' intento
 Per me dotto scalpel marmi non tolga;
 Godrò, che, dove innalza
 Ispida quercia i duri rami al vento,
 Tumulo erbofo il mio natale accolga;
 E se fia mai, che volga
 Ninfa pietosa à quella parte il piede,
 Del costante mio cor lodi la fede.

You

You will excuse my dwelling so long on the merits of a writer, whose worth (and it is great!) is almost unknown in this country. Certainly if the reverence of Italy secures the first place among her lyric poets to Petrarch, the second is due to Testi: but if just criticism were consulted in the affair, I suspect she would divide the throne between them, and place the rest at their footstool. Every reader I believe must confess that there are in the above extracts the grandeur and opulence of Pindar, the neatness, beauty, and elegance of Anacreon, mingled with the pathos which the ancients ascribe to Simonides. Perhaps in another century the Italians will begin to see and admire his merit; tho' what cloud should obscure his splendor from them, I cannot guess. Yet some reason there must be for his not receiving due applause among his countrymen, as I know none of their critics who have spoken of him as he deserves, and very few indeed who have mentioned him at all. I suppose he was a member of no academy.

LEST my Letter should extend to an unreasonable length, I shall defer my observations on the French and English lyric writers till my next.

L E T-

L E T T E R XX

IF the French have any title to a legitimate poetry, it is that of the lesser lyric style. Their language, pretty and familiar, can never rise to the sublime; which indeed, so far as I can see, their poets of any class have never yet attained, not excepting Corneille himself, whose vaunted *Qu'il mourut* is, to a British reader, a very trivial thought. We should deny the French, with their epic poems, tragedies, and comedies in rime! any poetry at all, were it not for such writers as La Fontaine in the lesser narrative, and Malherbe, Chaulieu, De la Motte, and the elder Rousseau, in the lyric.

RONSARD was once a fashionable lyric writer in France, and nothing can be a stronger proof of the false taste of his age. We have in our days seen a writer fashionable, because he used a pedantic jargon of Roman English; Ronsard
was

was likewise fashionable in his day, because he wrote in Grecian French. I hope by and bye the time will come when the most distant imitation of the sentiments and manner of classic writers (for example, Boileau's of Horace and Juvenal) will become, as it deserves, as ridiculous and contemptible as Ronfard's adoption of their verbage and idiom.

MALHERBE has great merit, as the refiner and restorer of the French language; but I know of only one ode he has written which may yet be read with pleasure; and that is the one addressed to the Duke of Bellegarde.

CHAULIEU's character and works you well know: he is read more, and De la Motte less, than he ought to be. The real beauties of De la Motte's odes are thicker sown than those of any other French writer.

ROUSSEAU's ode To Fortune has been much praised; but, in my opinion, yields to that addressed to the Marquis de la Fare, which has great merit: witness these stanzas.

Loia

Loin que la Raison nous éclaire,
 Et conduise nos actions ;
 Nous avons trouvé l'art d'en faire
 L'orateur de nos Passions.
 C'est un Sophiste qui nous joue :
 Un vil complaisant, qui se loue
 A tous les fots de l'univers ;
 Qui s'habillans du nom de Sages,
 La tiennent sans cesse a leurs gages
 Pour autoriser leurs travers.

* * * *

Mais vous, mortels, qui dans le monde
 Croiant tenir les premiers rangs,
 Plaignez l'ignorance profonde
 De tant de peuples différens :
 Qui confondez avec la brute
 Ce Huron caché sous sa hute,
 Au seul instinct presque réduit :
 Parlez : Quel est le moins barbare
 D'une Raison qui vous egare
 Ou d'un Instinct qui le conduit ?

La Nature, en trésors fertile,
 Lui fait abondamment trouver
 Tout ce qui lui peut être utile ;
 Seigneuse de le conserver.

Content

Mme. de la Fayette

Content du partage modeste,
 Qu'il tient de la bonté celeste,
 Il vit sans trouble et sans ennui.
 Et si le climat lui refuse
 Quelques biens, dont l'Europe abuse—
 Ce ne sont plus des biens pour lui.

Couché dans un antre rustique,
 Du Nord il brave la rigueur :
 Et notre luxue Asiatique •
 N'a point étié sa vigueur.
 Il ne regrette point la perte
 De ces arts, dont la découverte
 A l'homme a coûté tant de soins ;
 Et qui, devenus nécessaires,
 N'ont fait qu'augmenter nos misères,
 En multipliant nos besoins.

THE merit of Gresset, in some of his lyric poems, you well know. I need not therefore dwell upon it ; and as I know no other of the French lyric writers who deserve mention, I shall pass to the English, after just observing, that Boileau's noted ode, so replete with tinsel, and with nonsense, proves that he had not the smallest spark of poetical genius ; and that he could not even have arisen above the meanest class of scriblers, had he not been the very ape

of the ancients ; and had the address and agility of that animal sometimes to jump on the shoulders of his masters, and the impudent ignorance to look big when dressed in their cloaths.

THE list of English lyric poets contains the names of Waller, Milton, Cowley, Dryden, Collins, Gray, and Akenfide ; not to mention the Earl of Surrey, who is more venerable from his age, than valuable from his composition. Waller has no merit, save that of Malherbe in France, that of polishing and refining the language of his country. He has even less merit than Malherbe, his pages being evident proofs of that old doubt, *datur vacuum*. I have read him over thrice, to see upon what his fame stands ; but could not observe one image, sentiment, or expression that spoke the poet. The fact is, his fame is founded upon his estate, which was of five thousand a year, a wide foundation for renown ! His language, which is by no means valuable now, and of consequence, no foundation for present fame, was the amber that preserved his weeds from rotting : but as that is no longer in price, the whole

whole editions of his works may be thrown into the fire, without any diminution of English poetry. Why should I dwell on the worth of Milton in his lyric works of *Lycidas*, *Il Penseroso*, *L'Allegro*; or of Dryden in his celebrated *Ode*? Cowley's *Pindarics* may accompany Waller's works with all my heart: one or two of his *Anacreontics* are good. The merit of Collins lies in his tender melancholy; his defects are confusion and incorrectness of style. Gray is the first and greatest of modern lyric writers; nay, I will venture to say, of all lyric writers: his works tho few (alas, how few!) uniting the perfections of every lyric poet, both of present and former times. Tho Akenfide, considered as a lyric writer, wants richness of images and melody, his style will ever render what he has done in this way valuable.

Thus I have now enumerated all the modern reputable authors of lyric poetry. They are not few: and I hope you are now convinced, that they yield not to the ancient in number, nor in merit; tho the lyric muse is now almost confined to the private cell of

study ; and feldom appears in her ancient
glory, attended by the richest music, and
graced with the audience of heroes,

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

THAT five acts should be considered as an essential division of a perfect drama, rather than any other number, is perhaps one of the strangest instances in which reverence for a rule laid down by an ancient poet, whose infallibility has never yet been proved, has totally got the better of common sense, and of the superiority of modern science.

I REMEMBER that Vitruvius gives a reason, perhaps as well grounded as any can be, for this arbitrary division, namely, That the dramatic poets divided their fables into parts by a cubical ratio*. That is, as Mr. Dacier explains it, that the four songs of the chorus between the acts, joined with the prologue and *exode*, formed the cubic number *six*, the most perfect of numbers! A reason that could only

* Diviserunt spatia fabularum in partes cubica ratione.

have occurred to an architect; yet perhaps as well grounded as any that can be given for a custom which admits of no reason. It something resembles a rule which Menage, in his notes on Tasso's *Aminta*, tells us is laid down by the Signior Giovan Ogerio Gombaldo, a personage, as Menage takes care to inform us, *intelligentissimo delle cose della poesia drammatica*, most expert in dramatic business. This rule is, that the principal ladies in dramatic poems ought not to appear at the opening of the piece, when the first scenes are supposed to pass in the morning; *if the affair is not very important indeed*. For why? For reason good and weighty. *Essendo proprio delle Donne il levarsi tardi, l'impiegar molto tempo in abbellirsi, a farsi aspettare*: It being usual for ladies to rise late, to take a long time to dress, and to give long expectation before they appear. Hear, ye dramatic poets of our impolite age! learn wisdom: and bow with reverence to the manes of Signior Giovan Ogerio Gombaldo!

JESTING apart, we all know that Horace's rule is not authoris'd by the Greek masters of the drama, their plays being often divided into
three,

three, four, six, seven, eight, but seldom, if ever, into five acts; in the intervals between these divisions the chorus sung, and interludes were performed. For Casaubon, in his learned work *De Satyrica Poesi*, will have it, that, between the acts, the scene was often totally vacant of the tragic representation; and that the ΣΑΤΥΡΙΚΑ, or farces, were played to relieve the audience from the melancholy feelings of tragedy; a practice we would recommend as a further improvement, to those *semiliterati* among us who wish to revive the ancient chorus accompanied with music, but who would stare, were they told by somebody, who had read two books, that they are as far from the ancient drama as ever; THE WHOLE OF IT BEING ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED WITH MUSIC. I think, however, the taste of the ancients might be vindicated from Casaubon's accusation, as I differ from that learned man in his interpretation of the passage on which it is founded. It is of Marius Victorinus, the grammarian, and stands as follows: *Hæc apud Græcos metri species (iambica) frequens est sub hac conditionis lege, ut not heroas, aut reges, sed Satyros inducat; ludendi, jocandique causa, quo spectatoris*

animus inter tristes res tragicas Satyrorum jocis relaxetur. Casaubon observes, that the same phrase, *inter res tragicas*, is likewise used on the same occasion by Diomedes, another grammarian, which I suppose only arises from the one's copying the other; and that the phrase in both only implies, *inter cogitationes rerum tragicarum*; as a spectator may be said to be, *inter res tragicas*, "occupied with tragic affairs," as well immediately after the performance of a tragedy as during its representation.

BUT to come to the point, I have a great veneration for the ancients, but a far greater for truth and common sense: and it may, I believe, be safely asserted, that had the ancients arrived at our perfection in the drama (a subject perhaps of future discussion), they would, upon omission of the chorus, have confined their drama to three acts of modern duration, as the most proper form and length. Douglas, one of the shortest of our tragedies, has upwards of 1800 lines; the *Edipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, one of the longest of antiquity, has but 1536, with all its choruses, which make no part of the proper dramatic action, and
 3 only

only correspond to our music between the acts. Deduct 300 lines belonging to the Chorus of Edipus, and Douglas will exceed it by 600 lines, or the length of two acts. If Douglas therefore had but three acts, it were equal in length to the ancient tragedies.

THIS, with an admirer of the ancients, may perhaps afford a strong argument for the reduction of our drama to a shorter duration. But let us bring still stronger arguments from our own reason, nay from that of the ancients themselves.

PLATO has observed, in his *Parmenides*, that A WHOLE ACTION always consists of three parts, *a beginning, a middle, and an end*. Aristotle, in his book on Poetry, has with great justice applied this observation (but without acknowledging its author) to the drama: connecting it with the conduct of the fable in these words, “The *beginning* is that part which “gives no room to suppose that any thing “ought to have preceded it” (he means in the representation) “and which necessarily implies “that something must follow. The *end* is “quite

“ quite the reverse; for it implies that nothing
 “ should follow it, but that something must
 “ have preceded it. The *middle* implies, that
 “ something must precede it, and likewise
 “ something follow.” This observation may
 be far more happily employed in the division
 of the drama. The first act, or *beginning*, will
 then fix the spectator’s attention, by opening
 the plot, and raising his expectation: the se-
 cond, or *middle*, will further continue his per-
 plexity, till he is utterly at a loss to conceive
 how the piece will terminate; and the third,
 or *end*, will relieve him from that embarrass-
 ment and agreeable anxiety, after it is carried
 to the utmost, by an unexpected, yet natural
 catastrophe.

ARISTOTLE likewise praises the length ad-
 judged to the ancient drama, because the spec-
 tator was able clearly to recollect and compare
 every circumstance from beginning to end.
 The ancient drama, as we have already seen, is
 shorter, by the duration of two acts, than the
 modern; and the observation of Aristotle will
 not apply to the modern drama, for it is so
 long, that it is not easy for the spectator to
 recapit-

recapitulate, and observe the progress of so lengthened a story, perplexed and ravelled as every good drama is.

ANOTHER strong reason is, that the authors of modern dramatic performances always labour so much under the duration they must extend their plot to, that they are forced, of necessity, to have recourse to foreign and adventitious circumstances, merely to eke out their pieces to a proper length. Hence our love episodes and under plots; and many of the other glaring absurdities of the modern theatre; our dramatic writers never having found out, that the length allotted was more than any pure unmixed single action (one of the most essential attributes of the drama) would admit of, either according to the practice of the ancients, or common reason and observation.

FROM these arguments, I look upon the division of the fable into three acts, into a beginning, a middle, and an end, as the most perfect, compact, and elegant, that the higher drama will admit. Tho indeed I see not so great reason against four as against five acts,
when

when the plot requires a longer period than usual to adjust and deduce. Five and seven strike every mind as uncouth and heterogeneous numbers. This remark, you will say, has no great depth, nor philosophy; but what have our amusements, the subjects of our present examination, to do with depth or philosophy? Five modern acts may be looked upon as almost too long a duration for any fable fit for dramatic representation: four have been admitted by one of our best living writers with much success. The usual division of the drama here combated is one proof, among many, of the power of custom above that of truth and of nature:

Ond' è dal corso suo quasi smarrita
 Nostra natura, vinta dal costume.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXII.

TH E R E is a figure of speech which I know not if you have taken notice of, and yet it occurs in one or two popular writers, nay writers who have some just claim to praise: if, as a trope, it must have a Greek name, call it *'ANOIA*, in English **UTTER ABSURDITY**.

CERVANTES has shewn no small skill in the use of this figure, in Book III. Chapters ix. xi. of the History of Don Quiesada, where we find Sancho had his provision safe after it was taken from him by the galley slaves; and where, almost in one page, we read that he has lost his ass, that he is riding on him, and that he walks, because he has no such humble convenience; when the truth is, that the author had so far gone to sleep, as to forget that no miracles are now wrought upon asses; and that if Gines de Passamonte had him, Sancho could not. In Book IV. chap. iii. we also find the hero of the work draw his sword after he was robbed of it.

I MIGHT

I MIGHT enumerate one or two more instances from prose writers of repute, but shall content myself with adding one instance from a Roman, and one from a British poet, as the figure does not stand much in need of illustration.

VIRGIL in his *Eneid*, book XII. v. 35. makes Latinus speak thus to Turnus :

———— recalent nostro Tiberina fluenta

Sanguine adhuc, campique ingentes ossibus alpent.

In the name of all the profundity of dulness, how could the streams be yet *hot* with their blood, and their bones *whiten* the ground?

JAMES THOMSON in his poem called *Spring*, among his *Seasons*, has, with great tenderness of heart, pleaded, as from his very bowels, against the inhuman practice of killing oxen to make beef stakes ; and almost told us he would rather want his stake than have any such doings. Nay, what is still more tender, he advises us not to torment poor worms, by putting them upon the hook alive.—Upon the hook ! For what purpose ? Why to catch fish sure ; which he proceeds to give us cool directions for, as a fine diversion.

Strait

Strait as above the surface of the flood
 They wanton rise, or, urg'd by hunger, leap,
 Then fix with *gentle twitch* the *barbed hook* ;
 Some lightly tossing to the grassy bank,
 And to the shelving shore *slow dragging* some.

O JAMIE, JAMIE! Had you no bowels for
 fish? The poor man forgot that fish had feel-
 ings, I suppose, because he was fond of catch-
 ing and eating them ; whereas killing of oxen
 was quite out of his way.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

I PROPOSE in this Letter to continue and conclude my examination of the merits of Virgil as a poet, which I began on a former occasion*. This scrutiny has already been extended to his Bucolics and Georgics; and shall, in the last place, be applied to his Eneid, which is confessed by his admirers to be much inferior to his Georgics; a poem before shewn to have very little claim to applause. Let us examine this Eneid with regard to its plan, its characters, and its language, the grand divisions of epic poetry.

IF we take ever so cursory a view of the fable of the Eneid, we shall perceive it to be servilely copied from Homer's two immortal poems, the Iliad and the Odysssey. The last of these gives the general design of the first six books of the Eneid, the Iliad of the six last.

* Letter XVI.

The story of Dido, which is considered as the only proof that Virgil gives of originality or genius in all the Eneid, even by his admirers themselves, is a most injudicious and absurd imitation of Homer's Circe. It is injudicious, because Dido from her courage and manly spirit, shewn in leading a colony from her native realm to a remote and barbarous land, and settling and ruling that colony there, must in the book of human nature, page first, be read to have been a character very little susceptible of tender passions, far less of carrying them to such excess as Virgil represents. It is injudicious, because Dido had formerly borne the loss of a husband without desperation; nay had shewn a spirit upon the occasion almost too heroic for a woman: there is therefore no consistency in the character of Dido; which is certainly one of the grossest faults any writer can be guilty of. It is injudicious, because there is likewise in this love story an inconsistency in the character of Eneas, which any school-boy would be ashamed of; the character of Eneas is that of perfect piety; the pious ENEAS gratifies the irregular passions of a fond woman; and then, in return for the kindness

she hath shewn to him and his followers, he forsakes her ~~without remorse~~, because the gods command him so to do. Impious Virgil! would a Greek reader have cried; Homer only wounded the bodies of the gods, and their lesser morals; but you have struck at their very vitals, their essence! You have made them guilty of cruelty, of injustice, of ingratitude itself! Eneas, if he was pious, ought to have known that his gods could not be guilty of impiety; and to have disdained any imputation to the contrary, tho communicated in a vision. This story is lastly utterly absurd, and might have been added to our instances of that figure of speech, because in defiance of chronology, and of propriety, Virgil brings characters together as living at the same period, tho no less than 410 years asunder. What should we say of a writer, who should now introduce into an epic poem Alexander the Great making love to Julia the daughter of Augustus? Yet this were not so absurd by near a century as the amour of Eneas with Dido.

Why should I be condemned to follow Virgil thro all his feeble imitations of Homer, in
the

the plan and conduct of the Eneid? Virgil's storm is Homer's, tho Homer would not have begun with it. The conversations of the gods are all Homer's, Virgil meets Venus, Ulysses Nauficæa. The story of Dido hath already been spoken of. Homer hath games: Virgil hath games; his very ships, which he introduces as a novelty, prove him incapable of originality, for their accidents are from Homer's races. Homer's ships are on fire, Virgil's are on fire. If Ulysses goes to hell, Eneas goes to hell. If Homer enumerates the forces of both parties; so doth Virgil. The tale of Cacus is indeed a puerility; and the passage, in which Eneas is represented as going *his own ambassador*, an absurdity that would not have entered even into the dreams of Homer. Virgil indeed found the latter ludicrous invention, of a prince and general leaving his army when surrounded by enemies, in order to go an embassy, which the faithful Achates was certainly the fit person to mediate: I say, he found this necessary to introduce the affected and silly episode of Nisus and Euryalus, which is *wondrous pitiful*. Homer describes the shield of Achilles; so doth Virgil that of Eneas. Virgil then sends Iris to Turnus,

to let him know that Eneas was absent from his army at a time when there was the strongest necessity for his presence ; and that it is a lucky hit.

Turne quod optanti divum promittere nemo

Auderet, volvenda dies en attulit ultro.

Nay, to increase the absurdity, she tells Turnus that his wise competitor is gone, not to procure a proper martial aid, but to arm the country, *collectos armat agrestes*. Wonderful contrivance ! How we should have laughed at it in Blackmore ! Turnus takes the advice, and attacks the Trojan camp, because Hector had attacked that of the Greeks. The night scene and slaughter is a poor copy of that in the Iliad. Ulysses and Diomed were the proper personages of such an action, not two boys like Nisus and Euryalus : *incredulus odi*. The whole scene of the camp is such a copy of Homer's scene at the ships, as a wooden print is of a painting of Corregio. In the tenth book the gods come in again to fill up the story. Who will hint the most distant comparison of the return of Eneas with that of Achilles, tho evidently a paltry copy ? Achilles leaves the fight from the most potent reasons ; Eneas leaves the
camp

camp and the conflict, merely that he may return. The death of Pallas (by the bye a most improper name for a man, as it breeds an eternal confusion with the goddess Pallas or Minerva) is that of Patroclus; *quantum mutatus ab illo!* The funeral of Pallas is also that of Patroclus. The embassies for burying the dead, &c. &c. are all from Homer: not a death in the subsequent battle but from him. The combat of Eneas and Turnus, the leading feature of the twelfth and last book, every one perceives at first sight to be a servile and pitiful imitation of that of Achilles and Hector.

So much for the plan and fable of the *Æneid*. If we examine its characters, we shall find it still more defective; defective to a degree below contempt. It hath been said by Virgil's admirers, that Homer had exhausted strong and martial characters; therefore Virgil was forced to have recourse to gentle ones: gentle characters for an heroic poem! The fact is, that all Virgil's characters, such as they are, consist of copies, or remote imitations, of Homer; and that Homer's subservient, his lowest, characters are Virgil's first and highest ones. Wonderful

poet! Judicious imitator! To compare all the characters were tedious and needless; but be assured, that, upon accurate enquiry, every character whatever of the Eneid may be found in the Iliad or Odyssey in as strong a degree as the plot and leading incidents above pointed out,

To conclude with the language of the Eneid, there is not one sentiment or image in it but may be found in Homer, or other Greek poets. And I firmly believe from the observations of Macrobius on this head, that there is not one phrase in it that is not stolen from preceding Latin poets; that writer having told us in his Saturnalia, and indeed proved in many instances, that Virgil's whole poetry is only a *cento* taken from more ancient authors.

SUCH is the Eneid, which the author with good reason on his death-bed condemned to the flames; and, had it suffered that fate, real poetry would have lost nothing by it. I have said, that, notwithstanding all, Virgil deserves his fame; for his fame is now confined to schools and academies; and his style (the pickle that has preserved his mummy from corruption) is pure and exquisite.

L E T.

LETTER XXIV.

AS your young friend has interest enough to become an under-graduate in the State, I have no doubt but his talents will open a way to offices of the first importance, provided that his natural parts are cultivated by solid and elegant science. I know that he puts no great value on erudition; nay, thinks it rather an impediment to a man meant for public business; but, depend on it, he will find himself grievously mistaken. He will soon perceive that a mind without learning, however strong it may be in itself, stands upon no basis; and resembles a strong tower, built upon a volcano, and in perpetual danger of sinking into the abyss of ignorance. As I sincerely wish him well, and know his regard for my opinion, I shall submit to you a few thoughts on the subject, which you may communicate to him at a proper hour.

LORD BACON, one of the wisest men that any age or country hath produced, speaking of political affairs, observes, “ that no kind of
 “ men love business for itself, but those that
 “ are learned; for other persons love it for
 “ profit, as an hireling that loves the work
 “ for the wages. Or for honour, as because
 “ it beareth them up in the eyes of men, and
 “ refresheth their reputations which other-
 “ ways would wear. Or because it putteth
 “ them in mind of their fortune, and giveth
 “ them occasion to pleasure, and displeasure.
 “ Or because it exerciseth some faculty wherein
 “ they take pride; and so entertaineth them in
 “ good humour, and pleasing conceits towards
 “ themselves. Or because it advanceth any
 “ other their ends. So that, as it is said of un-
 “ true valours, that some men’s valours are in
 “ the eyes of them that look on; so such
 “ mens industries are in the eyes of others, or
 “ at least in regard of their own designments.
 “ Only learned men love business as an action
 “ according to nature; as agreeable to health
 “ of mind as exercise is to health of body;
 “ taking pleasure in the action itself, and not
 “ in the purchase. So that of all men they are
 “ the

“ the most indefatigable, if it be towards any
 “ business that can hold or detain their mind.”

This quotation, tho long, is so completely to the point, that no sentence of it could be spared. The argument contained in it is extremely forcible, and ought to weigh with the most unthinking mind ; for he observes, that none but men of learning love business of state for itself ; and certainly, if a man takes no delight in, makes not his supreme pleasure of, his business, let it be of whatever kind, he will never manage it well, much less rise to eminence in it.

A STILL stronger argument, if possible, may be brought from the superiority which wide science gives a young statesman ; almost equal to that of experience itself. Nay, I even doubt, whether in this particular instance, learning doth not exceed experience as much as it falls below it in the practice of domestic life. For no statesman, let his age and practice be ever so great, can from his proper experience, have so much skill in the incidents of government, as a man of solid and extended science, to whom all climes and all ages are present. A mind without erudition may be bold and acute,
 but

but cannot be vast and powerful. By learning a man becomes an inhabitant of the world at large*, and a cotemporary of all ages. The excellent author, above quoted, observes elsewhere, that books are like ships which pass thro the vast seas of time, and make the most distant ages to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions, the one of the other. Shall we apply this beautiful figure to our present subject, and infer, how much superior must that merchant be who deals upon such boundless stores imported from all ages, and from all countries, to him who trades upon his own narrow home-stock?

PRESCIENCE, which is so great a quality in a statesman, is only acquirable by wide knowledge of the events of former ages. From that knowledge he may, in very many cases, foretell what will happen, and of consequence use his prudence to guard against it. Very few accidents in political affairs are unique: the seeds of most of them have been sown in the wide field of universal nature; and they have produced similar fruit, tho at remote periods.

* This idea is commonly expressed by *citizen of the world*. Is the world a city?

You

You will perceive that most of the above reflections apply to that kind of erudition which is to be found in history, but above all in lives and memoirs. These may indeed be said to contain the solid science of a statesman: but, if he wishes to be perfect, elegant literature hath likewise great utility. If a man hath ambition to aim at high rank in the scale of government, nothing is so likely to effect that end as eloquence: and Cicero hath shewn, and indeed good sense must convince us, that no man can be a great orator without a large and unbounded fund of ideas. Such a fund is only to be acquired by study, and by appropriation of the ideas of others. Hence the necessity of expanding the memory over the whole circle of knowlege.

I SHALL only further observe, before I conclude, that the great examples to be found in ancient history operate like electrical fire when they meet with congenial minds. The greatest modern statesmen have caught the flame of their inspiration from the altars which ancient Greece erected to honour and to virtue. And for these altars built by solid science Greece
was

was indebted to Homer, who stands first in the class of polite literature. From Homer Greece derived that spirit which made her the wonder of other nations. Immortal bard! thou alone didst found the charge at Thermopylæ! Thou alone didst conquer at Salamis and at Marathon! That a paltry corner of Europe should stand first in the rolls of fame, is solely owing to thy divine genius!

If even the study of Latin literature could inflame Rienzi*, a person of no rank or expectation, so far as to operate his deliverance of Rome from the papal tyranny, in the darkest period of her history; tho his talents were unhappily not equal to his enthusiasm, and he was unable to digest a great fortune, as Pindar expresses it; surely the study of the Grecian literature, to which the other is but a shadow, hath effected, and will effect still greater things. Plutarch in particular is a writer that should be the constant companion of a virtuous states-

* In 1347. See the Life of Rienzi, written by his cotemporary, Tomaso Fiortifiocca; first printed at Bracciano 1624, 12mo. or the Pere du Cerceau's History of his Conspiracy, Amst. 1734.

man. The examples to be found in his lives of persons and of actions, so replete with virtue and sublimity as almost to exceed human nature, must elevate every noble and generous mind to a wonderful degree. Sage of Cheronea, Homer, it is true, kindled the flame ; but by thy cares only it is preserved bright for the perpetual use of mankind !

• LETTER

L E T T E R XXV.

IN the garden of science, as in other gardens, it costs more trouble to root out weeds than to plant flowers. I look upon the idea commonly entertained by men of letters, in respect to Augustan ages, to be one of these weeds; and shall here shew you what may be done to root it out and destroy it.

VELLEIUS PATERCULUS, an affected historian, was the first author of this foolish idea: which other writers have taken on trust, as usual, without sacrificing to common sense on the occasion.

WE are told by French critics, and you know that Mr. Addison, at the same time that he ridiculed our attention to French fashions, yet held up French critics, who are far worse, as worthy of all our reverence: I say we are told by French critics, that there have been
four

four Augustan ages, as they call them. The first is that of Greece, in the time of Philip of Macedon, in which flourished Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Apelles, Phidias, Praxiteles, Thucydides, Xenophon, Eschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, Philémon. The second is that of Rome, under Augustus, near or under whose reign flourished Laberius, Catullus, Lucretius, Cicero, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid, Phædrus, Vitruvius. The third is again that of Rome, after the revival of learning, and contains the names of Ariosto, Sannazaro, Guicciardini, Vida, Bembo, Sadolet, Macchiavel, Michael Angelo, Raffaello, Tiziano. The fourth and last is that of France, under Louis XIV. in which stand Corneille, Moliere, Racine, &c. &c.

Now you must observe, my dear friend, that we are gravely told that genius was, during these ages, carried to its greatest height in these respective countries. A remark of superlative futility. In the Augustan age of Greece, for example, where is the name of Homer, who flourished about 300 years before? Where is
that

that of Plutarch, one of the greatest writers that Greece produced, and alone worth ten of these Augustan authors, but who unhappily came more than 400 years after? In that of Rome where is Tacitus, almost their only original writer? In the age of Leo X. where is Tasso, the first of the Italian poets? Where Petrarca? Where Dante? Where Metastasio? Is not Gresset yet living, one of the best writers France hath produced? Where is Buffon? Where poor Jean Jaques? Where Voltaire?

THE superior good sense and observation of the English hath taught them to fix no Augustan age for their country. May her Augustan age be a *saeculum saeculorum*! The names of Chaucer, of Shakspeare, of Milton, of Gray, are as remote as those of Bacon and Newton: centuries elapse between them. Nature, it would seem, according to the *inventors* of these Augustan ages, illuminates other countries by constellations of petty stars; but in Britain concentrates the rays of many into one, which dazzles her rival nations with a *luxury of light*.

In political events, my friend, I lately had occasion to observe that nature acts much in one way; they depend indeed upon the passions of mankind, which are always the same; and upon the rules of human prudence, which admit of no great variation. But in respect to genius, which rules nature, and is not ruled by her, the case is very different. True genius is as much above regulation in the period of his appearance, as in all his other attributes. And the principal writers of any country are as seldom seen together as eagles. They appear single upon the wild and lofty rocks of genius basking in the noontide sun of fame.

LETTER XXVI.

AS I find my remarks on the last edition of Shakspeare were ~~not~~ displeasing to you, I shall now present you with such as have occurred on some of the other volumes.

Vol. IV. TWELFTH NIGHT. P. 190.
 'Would you have a love song, or a song of
 'good life?'. A song of good life means a pious
 ditty. The clown's question is ironical.

P. 204. 'It is filly sooth.' Every boy
 knows this means, *It is filly in sooth*, It is of
 genuine simplicity.

P. 210. *Mettle of India*, the reading of the
 old copy is right. The *mettle of India*, the
 gold, is Shakspeare's. To the *nettle* his com-
 mentators are welcome.

P. 215.

P. 215. The squabble between the two wise commentators, about the meaning of Shakspeare's obscenity, is truly diverting. In other editions, an N is put among the other capitals, and makes one of these jokes in which Shakspeare appears but one of the people.

P. 261. It is strange to see how the commentators have here mistaken the clown's character, who says to Malvolio, 'Are you not mad indeed, or do you but counterfeit?' They would fain make him talk sense. Shakspeare made him talk nonsense in character. The question means, Are you really in your senses, or do you but act as tho you were? As tho a mad man could counterfeit a wise man! Absurd, but highly in character! Praises equally applicable to the annotators.

WINTER'S TALE, p. 385. Cadis, in Scotland, I am informed, still means *lint*. Cadis is put upon a wound, is used to stop holes in barrels, &c. &c. The servant is talking a jumble of nonsense; and ignorantly mingles inkles and caddises with cambrics and lawns.

MACBETH, Act I. Sc. I. The power of raising thunder was one of the imaginary prerogatives of these imaginary beings, the witches. See *Wierus de Præstigiis Dæmonum*: a singular author who had the merit of being the first to discredit the belief in witchcraft, and thereby to save the lives of many of his innocent deluded fellow creatures. Yet such was the frenzy of his age, that he actually passed for a magician, who had written with a view to defend the fraternity from condign punishment. True it is, that after his work, in order to discredit the credulity of magic, he wrote a small treatise containing the names of sixty-eight dæmon potentates, with directions for evoking them. *O cæcas hominum mentes!*

P. 447. 'From the nave to the chops,' implies, I doubt not, that Macbeth ripped the rebel up from the navel to the neck. At any rate, if we must have nonsense, that of Shakspeare is preferable to that of his commentators at any time.

P. 447. 'Take my milk for gall.' That is, take my milk instead of the gall whereon
ye

ye live, for my temperament is now replete with such diabolical bitterness that I might nurture dæmons.

P. 480. ‘ Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it,’ is one of the most exquisite poetical figures in the world: and is a fine instance how much a trite remark, such as, *The serpent lurks under the flower*, may be improved.

P. 493. ‘ Weïrd sisters.’ Upon the first appearance of this word *weïrd* should have been given the following learned explanation from Mr. Ruddiman’s Glossary to Gavin Douglas’s Virgil. ‘ WEIRD SISTERS, Parcæ. Skinner derives it from the German *werben*, to consecrate. Some would rather bring it from *word*, as the Latin *fatum* comes from *fari*, and as the Latin *dictio* is frequently taken for *the response of an oracle, or God*. It comes certainly from the Anglo Saxon *ƿýpð*, *fate*, *fortune*: Francice *Urði*, *fatum*, &c. and these again are most probably from the Belgic and Teutonic *werden*, Anglo Saxon *ƿeopthan*, &c. to *come to pass*. Because fate, or destiny, must

‘ necessarily come to pass : whence the Scottish
 ‘ *wae worth him* ; in Chaucer and Pierce Plow-
 ‘ man, *wo worth*, that is *woe befall him*.’ It
 may be added, that in Chaucer the destinies
 are often called *werdes*.

P. 494. ‘ Go bid thy mistress when my
 ‘ drink is ready
 ‘ She strike upon the bell.’

It was the custom in the feudal ages to drink
 wine at going to bed. See an extract of a Pro-
 venzal poem to this effect in St. Palaye, *notes*
sur la Iere partie. It was called in France
le vin de coucher. In the ancient list of the
 French kings household, *le vin de coucher* is
 mentioned as a perquisite annexed to certain
 offices.

P. 521. ‘ What in our house.’ We are as
 much obliged to the commentators for giving
 us such notes as those of Warburton on this
 place, as we are to Shakspeare for his scenes of
 fools and madmen, interspersed with pathetic
 ones. Well may Akenfide make Shakspeare say
 that Warburton’s conceits are more strange

Than his own fools and madmen knew.

Ode to Thomas Edwards Esq.

Why preserve them, ye his wise successors ?

P. 537. ' At first and last a hearty welcome.' Can any one misunderstand this? Sure nobody but the commentator. Need I add, that it means, At the beginning and at the end of the feast, an hearty welcome?

P. 558. What is the meaning of the phrase *The bladed corn be lodged*. Does it imply *the corn just bladed be blown flat on the ground*? Surely if it does, it forms a woeful anticlimax with the other image in this line, and *trees blown down*. Or does it mean a greater prodigy, *does the lodged corn shew premature blades*, by a transposition of the words not uncommon to Shakspeare?

By the bye corn was, with the ancient Romans, esteemed a special object of witchcraft or enchantment; witness this law of the Twelve Tables: *Qui fruges excantasset, pœnas dato; neve alienam segetem pellegeris excantando; ne incantanto, ne agrum defruganto.*

P. 562. The sublime apparition of the future kings, which has such a strong theatrical effect, is, I think, founded on a passage of Ariosto. See his scene in Merlin's cave.

P. 593. 'Patch' is a common appellation for a fool with the old English writers, alluding to the *patched* or motled coat formerly worn by state fools. So in *The Praise of Folie*, translated from Erasmus, by Sir Thomas Chauloner, and printed by Bertholete, 1549, 4to. b. l. fig. G. 1. 'More happie and blisfull than
' is this kynde of men whom commonly ye
' call fooles, doltes, ideotes, and *paches*.' And on the opposite page, 'I have subtraied these
' my felie *paches*.'

P. 594. 'My way of life is fallen into the
' fere the yellow leaf.' A most foolish emendation of *May of life*, for *way of life*, is here rashly admitted into the text. Shakspeare's metaphor here challenged is My way, my path, of life, which formerly was among the green, the flourishing woods of summer, is now fallen into the fading groves of autumn. Can a juster metaphor be used? The reading in the text is quite absurd. How could May be suddenly changed into autumn? Was Macbeth in the May, in the spring of life? Or, to conclude all, Is Shakspeare always correct in his metaphors? Yet observe, and laugh, when these annotators correct Shakspeare, they correct him into blunders.

P. 608,

P. 608. If the stage direction, *Re-enter fighting and Macbeth is slain*, operates against the real speeches of the persons, why reprint it from the folio? The reader is doubtless much obliged to the sapient commentators, for ransacking musty folios to treat him with garbage!

Vol. V. KING JOHN, p. 19. *Philip* is a common address from children to young sparrows kept tame when they feed them; the note of the bird something resembling the sound of that name.

P. 103. The vow is not in the forms of chivalry.

P. 285. FIRST PART OF HENRY IV. Gildon, in his derivation of Hotspur's rant, proves himself a critic twice the size of Warburton.

P. 287. 'Half-faced fellowship.' The image appears to me to be borrowed from coins, in which only half the countenance appears. Now countenance implies *protection, personal friendship, and assistance*, as well as *the face*. Witness the pun of a certain noble lord,
who,

who, to procure a friend of his an election for member of parliament, employed a citizen of the burgh canvassed for, who had a very remarkable face of deep scarlet studded with black lead. He however exerted himself so well as to procure my lord's friend the election. My lord was upon the hustings at the time, and, after thanking the electors, he turned round to his agent with these words, ' You will allow me to return my thanks to you, Sir, in particular, for the *very remarkable countenance* which you have shewn us thro the whole of this affair.' Shakspeare uses *half-faced* for *half-countenanced*: a fellowship to which the parties gave but half their *genuine* friendship and concurrence.

P. 288. *Wasp-tongued* is a metaphor nothing like so hard as many used by Shakspeare; and implies, with a tongue poisonous and keen as the sting of a wasp. Let us, with due gratitude, return thanks to Mr. Steevens for his skilful quotation to prove that Shakspeare knew where the sting of a wasp lies; not in its mouth but in its tail!

P. 311. 'To play with mamnets, and to tilt with lips.' *Mamnet* is from the French *mamelle*, a woman's breast. The connection of the text calls for this interpretation.

P. 342. Count Dillon, in his Travels thro Spain, gives us an explanation of the etymology of the name of that liquor called *sack*, which is more plausible than that of the very ingenious annotator. It is, says he, from *zague*, a skin to put wine in. Let me add, that the Spanish word is derived from the Arabic, and now signifies, metaphorically, a drunkard. It is sometimes spelled *çaque*.

P. 344. Falstaffe was not *here*, or in the room, which saves the prince from the charge of an absolute falsity. The prince's speech contains not one lye; it hath only dissimulation, and might have been spoken by a quaker.

P. 366. *Favours* are a common expression for ~~white~~ cockades, worn in the hat at marriages, and the like *gifts* from brides, &c. &c.

P. 391. And behold it came to pass, that Oliver Cromwell was discovered in these days to have studied his speeches in Shakspeare!

SECOND

SECOND PART OF HENRY IV: P. 443.

The *rowel*, every reader of a single book of heraldry knows, was always a minute wheel radiated like a star. *Up to the rowel head* implies, up to the head of one of the spikes with which the rowel was radiated.

P. 472. *Rampallian* is from *ramper*, a stout fellow or wench, as *rascalion* from *rascal*: *fustilarian* is a fellow drest in *fustian*. Mr. Steevens should reserve his erudite etymologies for the next edition of his friend's dictionary.

P. 516. Shakspeare's idea of a tempest hanging the waves in the shrouds, was certainly strong enough, without his annotators pushing it to bombast. Mr. Steevens must have a bold heart, and certainly deserves to be made an admiral for his notion, that a tempest that *hangs waves* in the top *shrouds* of a vessel is a *moderate* tempest. Pray do turn poet, Mr. Steevens, and give us an *immoderate* tempest by all means, that we may know what it is to joke and be in earnest!

P. 523. The ingenious annotator would not have asserted so positively that the surname of Hrolf, king of Denmark, namely *Krak*,
 2 signifies

signifies *a boy*, had he read that rare book *Historia Hrolfi Krakii, per Thormodum Torfæum, Hafniæ, 1715. 12mo.* where, p. 147. Torfæus, learned as he was in the northern languages, leaves us in uncertainty about its meaning, and tells us that Saxo interprets it *a trunk of a tree*; Magnus Olafius, in his version of the Edda, *a dagger*; and Stephanius, *a crow*.

P. 529. *I cannot away with* is a phrase of dislike used in the common prose translation of the psalms, and other places of the bible oftener than once.

P. 535. The reading of the old folio and quarto is right, ‘he was so forlorn that his dimensions to any thick fight were *invincible*:’ and that of the commentators wrong, as usual. Why may not a minute object be said, without any great figure, to be *invincible to the fight*? *My fight cannot overcome it, for perceive it, command it*, might even be a vulgarism, it is so easy a mode of expression:—nay, I believe it actually is.

P. 570. *Port* is the common phrase in Scotland, if I may trust my information, for *gate*, to this day, being immediately from the French.

French. The *West port*, *Bristo port*, &c. are the present names of the gates of Edinburgh.

P. 581. ‘ *I will not excuse you.*’ It is the first time I have heard that *variation of phrase* was a proof of *sterility of brain*, but quite the reverse, as every body knows. If any writer could blot paper with such absolute absurdity, why preserve it? The humour, as Shakspeare meant it, lies in Shallow’s being drunk and talkative, and yet, with all his prate, being only able to express the same idea for want of others. The fact is, that not one of Warburton’s notes was worthy of preservation, for they do not even raise laughter or pity, they are so utterly below the gripe of common sense:—and disgust and contempt are by no means agreeable emotions.

THE note upon *William Cook* in this page is in the true antiquarian style, and as such I leave it. *Coke*, I have no doubt, was a proper name as well as *Canning*.

P. 605. Doll could not speak but in the language of the forest! *Rascal* does not signify *rascal*, but *lean deer*! See what it is to be on the watch to show a little musty reading, and ~~unknown~~ knowledge.

THE

THE word *Castilian*, used somewhere in one of the parts of Henry IV. or in The Merry Wives of Windsor, I forget which, appears to me to be derived from *castille*, which St. Palaye tells us is still familiar French for a *quarrel*. Hence *castillian*, quarreler.

VOL. VI. KING HENRY V. p. 3. • O for a muse of fire.' Shakspeare knew nothing of the allusions pointed out by his commentators, What absurdity to imagine that Shakspeare, whose learning they utterly deny, should be skilled in all the systems of philosophy! What still greater absurdity to suppose, that Shakspeare had recourse to the depths of philosophy for a thought of the most trivial stamp! *A muse of fire* is a fiery, ardent vein of poetry; a metaphor, which, had it occurred in some newspaper poetry, would have passed without notice by those who pretend to admire it, and find out philosophy, and God knows what, in it.

R. 4. The many times that Shakspeare uses *O for a circle*, have not occurred to me.

P. 32. The remark that Shakspeare derived his image of Expectation from Edward III. in the horse armory in the Tower (which by the bye, I suppose, did not exist in Shakspeare's time) is truly childish; and worthy of a country booby on his first visit to the lions.

P. 68. 'Confounded base' is a violent metaphor; the same with *terrified base*: base that is in fear lest the overhanging rock should fall on it. Who ever heard that *confounded* signifies *worn* or *wasted*? The sand by the shore,

Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean,
seems to me to be by Shakspeare, in this place, called the *base* of a rock by the sea side; as *that on which it stands*.

P. 371. HENRY VI. 2d Part. Anecdotes with regard to the mandrake may be found in Brown's *Vulgar Errors*.

P. 384. 'Savage islanders (*stabbed*) Pompey the Great.' It is very surprizing that the *learned* commentators should here challenge Shakspeare for that ignorance which only darkened their own minds. Was not Pompey
stabbed

stabbed in Egypt, at that mouth of the Nile on which Alexandria stands? Hath not the Nile seven mouths, or outlets, by which it issues into the ocean? Were not the inhabitants of the interstices of land, between these outlets, with the utmost propriety called *islanders* by Shakspeare, while their respective territories are called *islands* by different writers of antiquity, who likewise, I believe, give us their several names? At any rate, the whole space between the extreme mouths of the Nile, is known to every schoolboy, by the name of the *Island of Delta*. But even, independent of this interpretation, might not Shakspeare, in the exuberance of his fancy, have here meant to express that the Egyptians, who murdered Pompey, must have been natives of Meroe, or of the remote *islands* in the Nile, toward the cataracts, who are represented by Heliodorus in his admirable romance, if I mistake not, to have been as barbarous as the Egyptians of the lower countries were humanized?—Shakspeare, I must say, appears to me infinitely superior to any commentator he has yet had, even in classical science.

Vol. VII. p. 8. l. 3. for 'this it is,' read 'thus it is.' P. 11. l. 14. for 'post-horse,' read 'post-haste.' P. 33. A *bottle* spider is evidently a spider kept in a bottle long fasting; and, of consequence, the more spiteful and venomous.

My remarks on the remaining volumes, you shall have on a future occasion. I shall conclude my present Letter with an apology for quoting a few black-letter books in these brief notes. They are such as have occurred to me as worth reading, from their curiosity or style; for I do not think any one can form a proper knowledge of his native language, without being a little versant in all its stages. As to reading masses of antique nonsense, on purpose to illustrate any writer, gratitude is certainly due by the public to him who can sacrifice his very understanding in its service.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

YOU remember well that the Abbé du Bos, one of the most ingenious critics France has produced, if that be any praise, has, in his Reflections on Poetry and Painting, employed many chapters to prove, that climate has a most certain and immediate influence upon the human mind. His arguments I must beg leave briefly to recapitulate, as I mean to set them in opposition to those of a more eminent writer of our own; and shall then offer you my own thoughts on this very curious subject, since you require them.

THE Abbé, in support of his opinion, first produces a beautiful quotation from Fontenelle, ‘ Different ideas,’ says that amiable writer, ‘ are as plants, and flowers, which do not grow ‘ equally in all climates. Perhaps our territory ‘ of France is as improper for the Egyptian ‘ modes of reasoning, as for their palm-trees; ‘ and, without going so far, perhaps the orange-
N 2 trees,

‘ trees, which do not flourish here so easily as
 ‘ in Italy, denote that there is in Italy a certain
 ‘ turn of mind, which we have not in France.
 ‘ It is however certain, that by the reciprocal
 ‘ connection and dependence, that exists among
 ‘ all the parts of the material world, the differ-
 ‘ ence of climate, perceivable in its effects upon
 ‘ plants, ought also to extend its influence to
 ‘ the powers of the human brain.’ This argu-
 ment, fantastic as it may appear, has more
 verisimilitude than may at first sight be attri-
 buted to it. Certain it is, that the further
 natural philosophy proceeds, the more connec-
 tion is discovered between plants and animals:
 and the most eminent botanists have confessed,
 that the surest plan of attaining to perfection
 in that science is, to allot to plants as much of
 the properties of animals as possible; such as
 sleep, difference of sexes, and the preference of
 one nourishment or soil to another.

To proceed with the most remarkable of the
 Abbé’s arguments. He attempts to shew, that
 some countries have naturally given birth to
 arts without receiving them of others; such as
 Egypt, for instance; and he might have added
 China;

China; whereas, in others, some arts would never take root, tho planted by sovereign power, and nurtured by golden showers of liberality. He instances painting in England; which, had he received a prophetic glimpse of our days, he would have omitted.

MANY of his other arguments are those of a man who wishes to go ingeniously wrong: and I must here beg leave to make one general remark on his work, naturally arising from his arguments and quotations on this subject; which is, that the Abbé thro-out displays woeful ignorance of the Greek tongue and Greek writers; scarce one of which he even quotes, tho they bear the same proportional value to the Latin as gold doth to silver. Hence his admiration of Virgil, and his seeming to forget that there is such a writer as Homer in the world: a defect utterly contemptible, and unpardonable, in a writer who pretends to instruct his readers in critical knowlege, and a due estimate of works of literature. To return:

He proceeds to shew the power of climate upon genius, from the characters of nations; and, in the succeeding section, offers his answer to such objections as may be drawn from the characters of the Romans and the Dutch; so entirely opposite in ancient and modern times. His arguments are derived from the changes which nature hath made on these countries. In Rome, by the infection of the ancient *cloacæ*; and, in Latium, from the want of cultivation, and the marshes not being kept drained, as in ancient times; or from the mines (he means *strata*) of alum, sulphur, and arsenic, which nature hath been forming by degrees; and which exhale malignant vapours of power to affect both mind and body. ‘We see frequently,’ says he, ‘in *La Compagna de Roma*, a phænomenon, which forces us to think that the attraction of the air is owing to these mines’ (*strata*) ‘formed near the surface of the ground. During the heats, exhalations arise, which kindle of themselves, and form long columns of flame. If these,’ he adds, ‘had appeared in Livy’s days, his history would have been full of the sacrifices offered for the expiation of such prodigies.’ The changes which nature

ture

ture hath effected in Holland, lie in the destruction of her ancient forests, now in many places discoverable fifteen feet below the surface of the earth ; and the consequent elevation of the territory.

IN the next section he shews, by many ingenious instances, that the difference of climates is, in many countries, owing to the difference of the emanations of their respective soils ; tho such countries are equally distant from the equinoctial line. Poland, for instance, varies from England ; owing to the ground of the former being replete with salt ; that of the latter with lead, tin, coals, and other minerals. The Abbé concludes his remarks on this subject by arguments, in another section, to shew that the difference of talents in the same people, in different ages, is to be ascribed to some variation of their climate, So much for Du Bos.

THE remarks of Montesquieu, on the influence of climate on mankind, I need not rehearse, as they principally tend to shew the influence of climate upon manners ; an object quite distinct from our present, which is the influence of climate upon the powers of the mind,

To make the scale even with the Abbé Du Bos, I shall only recite a few verses of Mr. Gray, to be found in the fragment published of his admirable poem On the Alliance of Education and Government necessary to produce *great* and useful men; his own words, and which, by the way, imply, that he considered climate as deserving no notice, even in the production of great men, or men of genius,

Can opener skies, and suns of fiercer flame,
 O'erpower the fire that animates our frame;
 As lamps, that shed at eve a chearful ray,
 Fade and expire beneath the eye of day?
 Need we the influence of the northern star,
 To string our nerves, and steel our hearts to war?
 And where the face of nature laughs around,
 Must sickening virtue fly the tainted ground?
 Unmanly thought! What seasons can control,
 What fancied zone can circumscribe the soul?
 Who, conscious of the source from whence she springs,
 By reason's light, on resolution's wings,
 Spite of her frail companion, dauntless goes
 O'er Libya's deserts, and thro Zembla's snows?
 She bids each slumbering energy awake;
 Another touch, another temper, take.
 Suspends th' inferior laws that rule our clay;
 The stubborn elements confess her sway:
 Their little wants, their low desires, confine;
 And raise the mortal to a height divine.

I be-

I believe, however, my dear friend, you will agree with me, that the truth, as usual, lies in the mid of these two extremes. That climate hath absolute power over genius, I will no more pronounce with Du Bos, than with Mr. Gray, that it hath none. In the utmost extremes of climate, in Greenland for instance, or in Zaara, some kinds of genius, I doubt not, may be found in perfection, so far as adapted to the climate, such as the warlike or the legislative; while others, such as the speculative, the philosophical, are totally heterogeneous to the soil. When I speak of legislative genius, as distinct from philosophical, I mean genius capable of forming laws for a community of no implex administration: a Lycurgus, for instance, they may have; but not a Bacon. As to other climes, which are not in such extremes, we are led to think that the defect of genius in some countries, and the opulence of it in others, is owing more to education and government producing manners incompatible with the exertions of genius, or nutrition of such exertions; than to a trifling variation of *the skyey influence*, as Shakspeare phrases it. Certain it is, that large countries in Asia, of equal or superior tempera-
ture

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 nature of climate to any in Europe, have in no
 time produced men of equal genius. Europe
 hath indeed, for these three thousand years, been
 the quarter of the world to which true and
 legitimate genius seems confined. Even in
 poetry, which is the least subject to climate of
 any exertion of genius, the Asiatics have, in all
 ages, been woefully inferior to the Europeans.
 In all ages, the poetry of the Asiatics has been
 strained to bombast, and glittering with all the
 beauties of absurdity, from the most ancient
 epoch down to our own times. As several cri-
 tics have of late shewn a very different senti-
 ment; with regard to holy writ in particular,
 which they, in their fondness of enthusiasm,
 would fain find as eminent in composition as
 in sanctity, I must beg leave to enforce my
 last assertion a little; and shall easily shew,
 that when they attempt to debauch our taste,
 by commenting on the beautiful and grand
 passages of scripture, they are forced to relin-
 quish every rule of sound sense. To instance
 in a few of the most noted passages,

‘LET there be light and there was light,’
 hath been sung upon, *usque ad fastidium*, owing

to a forged addition to Longinus, not to be found in any authentic MS. as Le Clerc hath shewn; who likewise informs us, that this passage is a common barbarism. A common barbarism, I grant, may yet be sublime: but did this passage ever strike any reader as sublime till he read its illuminators? Certainly not. Fine sublime that requires a label, like *This is a bear* of the bad painter, to point it out! Sublime that does not strike at once, and strike all, assumes that title falsely. ‘Clothed his neck with thunder,’ I will venture to pronounce the most consummate nonsense that ever was clothed with the thunder of bombast. Had it been found in some Grubstreet writer of heroic panegyric, we should never have done laughing at it. A horse wearing a neckcloth in battle, a neckcloth of thunder! *Proh Deum atque hominum fidem!* Dr. Blair, in his Lectures, who threatens in his preface to think for himself, and who, I grant you, hath employed much thought about what he could pillage from his predecessors for his own use, very gravely tells us, Lect. XLI. that ‘Isaiah describes, with great majesty, the earth reeling to and fro like a drunkard, and removed like a cottage.’ I see you

you laugh: yet one or two instances more. The same writer, who thinks for himself, tells us, that the comparifon, 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. ‘ He
 ‘ that ruleth over men muft be juft, ruling in
 ‘ the fear of God; and he fhall be as the light
 ‘ of the morning, when the fun rifeth; even a
 ‘ morning without clouds; as the tender grafs
 ‘ fpringing out of the earth by clear fhining
 ‘ after rain,’ is one of the moft regular and
 formal in the facred books. If fo, I wifh him
 joy with all my heart. For my part, I likewise
 think for myfelf; and I fee *two fimiles* in this
 paffage both totally *unlike*, informal and irregu-
 lar. But I am afraid of being tedious on a
 fubject fo clear: and fhall return in obferving,
 that, for abfurd and filthy imagery, witnefs
 fome parts of Ezekiel, the beft of the facred
 writers, the fcripture yields to no compofition
 in any language; but of fublime or beautiful
 ftyle, I can from that work produce no proofs.
 Writers who hold it up in that ludicrous view
 do as great harm to religion as to good tafte:
 it refembles the drefling of a pious and worthy
 clergyman in the garments of a hero, or of a
 lovely woman; and then telling us he hath the
 fublimity of the one, and the beauty of the
 other:

other: whereas it only puts him in an awkward light; and brings derision and contempt upon his holy character.

THE eastern writings are, to this day, remarkably deficient in that quality which we call good sense: and which must reign, in an eminent degree, over works even of the warmest fancy, if they are meant to please the true judge. The nightingale's love for the rose, and all the other trite and absurd imagery of their best poetry, appear mere childishness to the superiority of European wisdom. The vales of Asia, it is true, teem with flowers, but they are sickly, and of no duration: among the odorous forests, that spread fragrance over the eastern countries, the strong oak of sense will not flourish.

CLIMATE, I conclude upon the whole, hath some power over genius; but not so much as is ascribed to it by some writers, nor so little as is imputed by others. To attempt to mark the boundaries of its dominion, would be one of those airy speculations that serve to display the writer's ingenuity at the expence of his wisdom.

L E T.

LETTER XXVIII.

AMONG the innumerable foolish books of memoirs, which the French little heroes of their own tales have produced, I believe no mean rank in absurdity is due to those of Cardinal De Retz. Lord Chesterfield, that profound genius, hath recommended them to public notice in Letters, which, it must be confessed, were not meant for the public eye, but which stand in the inverse ratio of the work *De rebus expetendis et fugiendis*; good judges always taking his recommendation as sufficient dispraise. De Retz and Bouhours are his favourites: the first, an ecclesiastic, who debauched women; and the other, an ecclesiastic, who debauches taste. Bouhours was, in fact, fifty years ago, known to be a true French critic, who prates much by rote, like a parrot, of what he could not understand. The fatuity of De Retz is, it must be owned, hid with a better masque. That masque is a false appearance of depth: I say, a false appearance; for, to an eye of any penetration, the sapience of De Retz is fragile and transparent as glass.

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His memoirs are addressed to a lady ; political memoirs to a lady ! Then he tells how many duels he fought, and how *immensely gallant* he was. O the pretty statesman ! No lady could see him without loving him, because he had fine teeth ; as he tells us was observed of him at court ! He differs with Mazarine about nothing ; and is feared before it was known that such a person existed !

To be serious. The talents of De Retz are thought amazing, because he had the mob of Paris at command ; and his political knowledge thought superlative, because he tells us, with all the pomp of maxim, that no mob can bear, *se desbeurer*, to lose a meal ; for this last is the only political axiom of his that I have seen taken notice of. To have a mob at command is no proof of talents, as a late occasion must convince us : that occasion must likewise shew the futility of the axiom above recited.

If ever there was a superficial egotist, who had knavery just enough to save him from being a fool ; who tells such lyes from mere vanity, as carry confutation in themselves, not

to

to speak of the reprobative testimony of contemporaries; who is always the hero of a tale of a cock and a bull; it is De Retz. If ever there was a writer who acquired a false reputation of depth from mere muddiness of affectation; whose foolish gravity passes for wisdom; who is in every point a mere French scribler of memoirs; it is De Retz.

IN the *Menagiana*, we are informed, that De Retz used to tell a story of his having seen a man catch hold of the vane of a windmill, go round on it, and alight on the spot of ground from which he had set out. This wise tale, which I suppose is another instance of his political talents, always struck me as a most just emblem of the Cardinal himself. He caught hold of a vane of the popular windmill; took a round; and was just where he was; saving that the height and rotation had such an effect upon his brain as he never got the better of, but ever after spoke and wrote like a visionary oracle.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

FARCE is no such modern invention as you imagine. On the contrary, it is, I have no doubt, the most ancient of theatrical exhibitions. Nor is pantomime much more modern. As I know you pique yourself more upon using your own sense than that of others; upon elegant knowlege, than upon erudition; I hope some little disquisition upon this point will prove an agreeable amusement to you.

CASAUBON, in his very learned treatise on the Satyrical Poetry of the Greeks and that of the Romans, has well established a very remote distinction between the *satires* of the two nations. Those of the first were little pieces or farces, represented on the stage. Those of the latter were a species of poetry quite distant from such representation; being merely moral poems, mingled with invective against vice and vicious characters. One instance only of the former is preserved in the Cyclops of Euripides: examples of the last may be seen in the writings of Horace, of Juvenal, of Persius.

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To proceed with the former, which is the object of our present enquiry, the ΣΑΤΥΡΙΚΑ, or Fārces, of the Greeks, were the invention of their festival days instituted in honour of the gods: for that wise and gay people rightly imagined, that the joy of man is the supreme praise of the Deity. Tzetzes tells us these entertainments were the invention of rude rustics; by which Casaubon understands that their origin is to be ascribed to the most ancient age; before towns were built, or civil society established. That the ΣΑΤΥΡΙΚΟΝ is the most ancient species of dramatic writing, we have the authority of Aristotle himself, who tells us that the choruses of ancient tragedy are borrowed from them: τὰ πολλὰ οἱ χοροὶ ἐκ τῶν Σατύρικων συνίσταντο. A circumstance not attended to by any of our critical writers, who universally look on the choruses as the original parts of tragedy, being at first songs in honour of the deities, to which dialogue was added by degrees. How long will our English critics dully follow the French; and tread always in the paths of each other, for fear of being lost in a search after the original fountains of knowledge? These satires of the Greeks were so

called from their actors, who personified the Satyrs, the imaginary attendants of Bacchus, at whose festivals they were originally performed; whereas the Latin Satyræ are derived from *satur*, *full*, as replete with variety of matter. For we must observe that the ancient Roman Satyræ were not continued invectives against vice, but sometimes treated the advantages of virtue, and the like, in an ethic and severe tone. Such is Casaubon's etymology: but why may not the Roman *satyræ*, or *saturæ* as more anciently written, be derived from *Saturn*, the deity at whose festivals the fæcine verses, the rude sketches of the Roman satire, were chiefly recited?

To return to the Græek farces. Their origin and etymology have been shewn: now for their subject. In this they differed totally from our farces, that they admitted of tragic subjects; nay the most ancient of them knew no other. Yet these subjects were not completely tragic; but allowed of a mixture of comic scenes, even in those that bore the hue of tragedy. They were in fact short tragicomedies. Mr. Addison, with his usual French superficiality

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ality of science, tells us, that tragicomedy is the monstrous product of the English stage. It was known to his admired ancients, both Greeks and Romans ; as he might have known, had he read Athenæus, with regard to the former ; or the prologue to the *Amphitryon* of Plautus, for we shall not expect that he would read the piece itself, with regard to the latter. By both nations it was applauded and admired. And Shakspeare alone might convince us, that it is the most natural, and consequently the most proper way, of constructing a drama, tho not the most safe or artificial ; as requiring far greater powers in the writer than when one turn of sentiment is begun and continued from the beginning to the end of a piece.

UNHAPPILY the only specimen we have of the Greek farce is in the tragic style ; but from it we may judge of the others ; for even in this the shocking story of *Odysses*, or *Ulysses*, and the *Cyclops*, is apparently treated in such a ludicrous way as to produce the complete effect of *Tom Thumb*, *Chrononhotonthologos*, or the like mock tragedies. If such were the tragic farces, the comic ones must have super-
abounded

abounded with broad humour and laughter. The humour I however judge from the persons, a mob of drunken satyrs, must have been very impure: and suspect that the decency of the Cyclops of Euripides is the great reason of its being preserved in preference to so many others.

CASAUBON hath on this subject crouded his treasures, drawn from the very depths of Greek and Roman erudition, with great profusion. The learning he displays on this very curious subject amazes even the learned. I shall not, however, attempt to string any more of his pearls; but content myself with observing, that in his long enumeration of eminent Greek writers of farce, are the names of Thespis, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Lycophron, Bion.

AT what time the moderns thought of annexing farces to larger dramatic pieces, in order to diversify the entertainment, I will not take upon me to determine; but suppose the practice was not established in England till the Restoration. Among other customs borrowed

from France, I take this to have been one. The word *farce* is originally Latin, I suppose, from *farcire, to fill, to stuff*; alluding to its filling the entertainment, and rendering it complete. Like other Latin words, it has passed to us thro the channel of France; but is not, in my opinion, from the French *farcer, to play the droll*: I rather think that verb is from the substantive, as we may say *to make a farce of a thing*.

THE ancient farces, as hath been already observed on another occasion, were very commonly performed between the acts of their tragedies or comedies; as ballets are now danced between the acts of operas. By the bye, one cannot help laughing at Mr. Addison's bitter attack upon the opera, and his professed admiration of the ancient dramas. The opera is a complete copy of the ancient drama, in all its parts of recitation and song, accompanied with music and dance: ~~a formal chorus, it is true, is not now introduced; but the actors themselves form the singing chorus, in a way much more natural and proper; and for the dance, another province of the ancient chorus~~
unknown

unknown to its modern wellwishers, a real and distinct chorus of ballet dancers is preserved in all its lustre.

THE modern farces are with more propriety brought forward at the close of more important dramas; and are particularly necessary after tragedy, to relieve the mind, and prevent our sorrows, arising from fiction, to enter into real life, where too many real sorrows await us.

IT is almost unnecessary to add, that in many of our farces are to be found some of the strongest comic situations, and the most genuine wit and humour that grace our stage. In our farce we allow more latitude of plot, broader humour, and higher colour of character, than in comic dramas of a greater denomination. Comedy, tho she ought always to be chearful, is generally content merely to smiler and smile; whereas Farce ought always to laugh aloud. To the eminent names of Greek writers of farce, mentioned above, the English may add those of Fielding, Garrick, Smollet, Colman.

HAVING spoken so much of farce, let us now consider pantomime. The prodigious estimation in which this art and its professors were held by the ancients, appears from innumerable testimonies of their authors. To quote two or three of them were ridiculous; for one cannot open an ancient who takes any notice of, or derives any metaphor from the theatre, without observing the important light in which they considered pantomime. Nor shall we wonder at this, when we remark the high perfection to which the ancients had carried this art. By the gestures merely of the pantomimic actors were the ancient audiences infinitely more affected either with tragic or comic sensations, than with all the dramatic pomp of musical declamation and sympathetic force of recitative. If you wish more information on this head, peruse Lucian's treatise "On Pantomime."

THE further south we go, the more do people use gesture; and the more are they affected by it. A Frenchman uses infinitely more gesticulation than an Englishman; and an Italian still more than a Frenchman. Hence
Italy

Italy has always been the proper climate of pantomime. In ancient and in modern days, the *sannio*, or *harlequin*, with all his brethren of grimace, have chosen Italy for their chief theatre of action. Italy has, both in ancient and modern times, been the inventress of ludicrous pantomime; and I suspect also of serious, which now only exists in the grand ballets of the opera, lately brought almost to ancient perfection and pathos by Noverre. Magnificence in particular, the grand character of the ancient stage, is, in these ballets, or modern serious pantomimes, carried to a greater height than in any other theatrical exhibition of these times.

BUT it is the pantomime of the English stage that now draws our attention. The contempt expressed for this expensive amusement, by some men of severest wisdom, is itself contemptible. No amusement deserves scorn that is an innocent relaxation from anxious thoughts and the cares of life. No dramatic exhibition excites less thought, or more ocular attention, than pantomime; none is of consequence more calculated for the man of study, or of care.

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It may however be regretted, that the sums expended in Grecian days, to place their grand tragic scenes in an exuberance of decoration, are now wasted on this inferior performance. The magnificence of unmeaning processions, &c. in present pantomimes is amazing. The managers of the winter theatres commonly produce a pantomime in the course of every season; and rival each other in this annual extravagance with the profusion of two rich peers contending for the return of members of parliament. These pantomimes are commonly brought forward during the Christmas holidays, when all the world is idle; and the constant succession of them shews that the managers do not form their nest-eggs of gold, to use a metaphor Hudibrastic, without making their clients lay in proportion.

INDEED pantomime is now the best entertainment we find in our theatres. It is quite astonishing to remark how much our stage hath declined within this half dozen years, since the retreat of Garrick. It is overwhelmed with floods of Irish nonsense, and stuff more stupid than stupidity, where not one glimmer of sense
or

or wit appears. Had those Irishmen, female scriblers, &c. offered their trash to a Bartholomew-fair audience a few years ago, they would have been hissed to scorn. Our poor audiences sit with Dutch phlegm, and take what God sends. English good nature, or *bon hommie*, if you please, puts us upon a level with the most stupid and barbarous of nations. What the judgement of our audiences condemns, their *good nature* with a vengeance! comes in and reprieves at the very gallows. However it is some consolation to know that our stage cannot possibly be worse than it is, so it must mend of course.

CHANGE of scene was totally unknown to the ancients: in this mute display they must therefore have yielded to the wonderful mechanism of modern times. The mechanic wit of modern pantomime is transcendant; a lawyer is changed into a lady of Billingsgate, and a judge into an owl, in a moment. With regard to the dignity of amusement, I suppose our comic pantomime yields not to that of the ancients; for Plutarch tells us, in his Symposiacs, that dogs regularly bred to the stage performed

formed parts in the ancient pantomime; a perfection to which we have not yet arrived.

THE modern harlequin is a perfect copy of the ancient *fannio*, or *mimus*. The *mimus* had his face smeared with soot, *fuligine faciem obductus*, and wore a habit patched of many colours; as we learn from Apuleius in his Apology, *Quid enim si choragium thimelicum possiderem? Num ex eo argumentavere etiam uti me consuevisse Tragædi syrmate, Histrionis crocota, Mimi centunculo?* The *centunculus* is a diminutive of *cento* used by Juvenal for a garment made of patches; whence it is applied metaphorically to a poem composed of shreds of others; as the noted *cento* of Ausonius.

THE other pantomimic persons of our theatre are Columbine, Pantaloon, and the Clown. The Italians have likewise The Doctor, Beltrame of Milan, Scapin, The Italian Captain, The Spanish Captain, Scaramouche, Giangurgulo the Calabrian, Mezzetin, Tartaglia, Punch, Narcisin de Malabergo. A grand pantomime, including all the Italian personages in their proper characters, is yet wanting to the English stage.

L E T T E R

LETTER XXX.

I DO not wonder that the praises which Dr. Blackwall hath bestowed on Gravina's work, *DELLA RAGION POETICA*, together with the uncommon title of the work itself, have excited your curiosity. The book is rather rare, tho' of no great price; and till I can procure you a copy, accept a short account of it.

It is divided into two books, and addressed *A Madama Colbert Principessa di Carpegna*; an impropriety similar to that of De Retz, in addressing a work to a person who could never be supposed to understand it. Was the patroness the daughter or niece of the great Colbert? He mentions her ancestors as being of Scotland, and passing into France. By the bye, the Scottish name is Cuthbert; and Mr. Cuthbert of Castlehill, an old Scottish title, assumes, as I am informed by different countrymen of his, the name of L'Abbé Colbert, when at Paris, where he hath fixed his residence.

IN

IN this address there is nothing remarkable, save a very just remark, which, tho made likewise by Pope, is not, and never will be, sufficiently attended to; namely, ‘ that there is equal difficulty in judging perfectly well of poetry, as in composing with perfection: and that it is far easier to be a middling author than a just critic.’ He proceeds, in the address; to shew the design upon which his work is written; and what he understands by the title of it, DELLA RAGION POETICA, *Of the Reasons or first Causes of Poetry*; and observes, that as every noble edifice is built according to the rules of architecture, and these rules have geometry for their *ragion*, or first cause; so the knowlege of poetry is the *ragion* or foundation of the rules of poetry. He then proceeds to shew the true knowlege of poetry to consist in an eternal idea of fitness of things; and, in the fifteen or sixteen succeeding sections, utterly loses himself in the Platonic system; on which a man of great mind, who gives himself up to erudition, is so apt to be wrecked. Platonism was indeed the madness of Gravina, as appears from all his works: and an attachment to an enthusiastic system is the grand reason.

son why the works of the master of Metastasio have been so little read.

FROM this account of the leading idea of his work, you will at first glance perceive that the fabric rests upon sand. Nothing indeed can well be more futile, nor of falser criticism, than to infer an analogy between geometry, the coldest operation of the judgement, and poetry, the warmest exertion of the imagination. The fact is, that the rules of poetry have no *ragion*, as he quaintly and abstractedly calls it, but the example of former poets. I beg pardon for the expression, *rules of poetry*. Poetry knows no rules. The code of laws which Genius prescribes to his subjects, will ever rest in their own bosoms. *Rules of criticism* was the expression I meant to use; and these have no *ragion*, or first foundation, at all. They are drawn from Homer, Sophocles, and Pindar: what these masters do, say the critics, is right, and every thing else is wrong. Poor judges! Ye slaves who judge of your masters! Is not NATURE greater than Homer, Sophocles, or Pindar? Is not GENIUS the supreme arbiter and lord of Nature's whole domain; her superior,
her

her king, her god? Bring out your candle then, and teach the sun how to exert his meridian power!

IN these first fifteen sections, there are, nevertheless, some remarks worth notice; such as this, ‘ we must study diligently to impress upon verse an appearance of negligence; that the imagination may not revolt from its delusion, thro the force of apparent artifice.’ That upon the native gravity of the Romans is curious; and he ascribes to this the defect of Latin comedy. He observes, in another place, that Terence hath no comic force; and that Volcatius Sedigitus, an ancient critic, placed Terence only in the sixth rank even of Roman comic writers; yet his works, and those of Virgil, have reached us. Such is the power of style!

MANY of his observations upon Homer are fine; such as, his being the greatest poet, because his works all bear the very stamp of nature; none of his characters being perfect; the virtuous being painted as capable of vice, and the vicious as guilty of virtue. Perfect characters

acters form indeed a sure mark of a middling writer; who cannot copy nature, but only a feeble idea of perfection in his own breast. They are always insipid; witness Eneas, the most insipid character ever drawn; for the vices of Eneas, his dereliction of Dido, &c. are not described as imperfections of character; but are indeed mere inconsistencies.

His idea of the theology, and philosophic system of Homer, I look upon as without foundation. Homer, I am certain, had no allegory whatever in view, when he wrote either of his immortal poems: his only intention was to entertain; and, perhaps, to make money, by furnishing amusement to others. Let us not look upon the last motive as sordid: it was the motive of Shakspeare. I know of no book whatever that may not be turned into an allegory, with the help of a smattering analogy, which the meanest fancy is capable of forming. Alchymy has been found in the Hypneromachia of Poliphilo in all its secrets; and I doubt not might likewise be discovered by an adept in the Iliad, or in the Odyssey. They who find any thing in these poems more than the

entertaining narration of an interesting story, are methodists in poetry; and have as great a title to the inward light, which always comes thro a crack in the skull, as the methodists in religion.

AFTER escaping these fifteen sections of Platonic frenzy, we happily arrive at his characters of the most eminent poets of ancient Greece and Rome; who have all, according to the author's enthusiastic theory, written up to his idea of making all poetry a mystic veil of Platonism. He however doth not always harp upon the string of his madness; and when he doth not, his characters of the several ancient poets are admirably just and fine.

He concludes the first book with characters of the modern Latin poets of Italy, after sewing them to his system by a coarse thread of discourse; for he tells us, that there is now no occasion for mysticism in poetry, it being the fashion for truth to appear without any covering. As I hold modern Latin poetry in utter contempt, I need not tell you, that I agree with him in no one character of any of its authors.

IN

IN the second book he returns to his Platonism with fresh vigour in characterising Dante, on whom he dwells thro many sections. He afterwards proceeds to value the other Italian poets, mostly with great justice and acuteness.

THIS is, I believe, an accurate analysis of Gravina's celebrated performance, *Della Ragion Poetica*: a work, which, tho written by a man of fine taste and ample talents, is yet only a monument of the pernicious effects of system upon any science. Lord Bacon hath observed that any faculty reduced to an art must of necessity become barren, because art circumscribes it: as for instance, no good poetry can be written by an author who pays the smallest attention to arts of poetry. Which *arts* of poetry are indeed, in my opinion, so many contradictions in terms; for poetry is a faculty, not an art: an exertion of the mind to be circumscribed by rules, only when some wonderful inventor shall teach watches to think; there being fully as much absurdity in the idea of giving mechanism to thought, as in that of giving thought to mechanism. The remark of

('212)

Lord Bacon, above quoted, may justly be applied to system: with attachment to which if a writer is tainted, he can never acquire wide and lasting fame; which is only to be attained by the productions of a soul free as the mountain winds, and large as the universe.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

OF the numerous writers on truth, I know none who hath yet observed that the truth perceivable to human reason may be reduced to two kinds, truth of fact and truth of nature.

BEFORE I proceed further, allow me to tell you an anecdote,

SIR WALTER RALEGH, when confined in the Tower, had prepared the second volume of his immortal history for the press. He was standing at the window of his apartment, ruminating on the office of an historian, and on the sacred regard which he ought to pay to truth, when of a sudden his attention was excited by an uproar in the court, into which his prospect was directed. He saw one man strike another, whom by his dress he judged an officer, and who drawing his sword run the assailant thro the body; who did not however fall till he had knocked down the officer with

his fist. The officer was instantly seized, while lying senseless, and carried away by the servants of justice; while at the same time the body of the man he had murdered was borne off by some persons, apparently his friends, who, with great difficulty, pierced thro the vast croud that was now gathered around.

NEXT day an acquaintance of Sir Walter called on him; a man, of whose severe probity and honour, Sir Walter was convinced from innumerable proofs, and rated his friendship accordingly. Raleigh, after their first compliments, told the story of yesterday's fray; which had impressed him deeply, as being a spectator of the whole affair. What was his surprize, when his friend told him that he was perfectly mistaken in his whole story! That his officer was no officer, but a servant of a foreign ambassador; that this apparent officer gave the first blow: that he did not draw his sword, but the other drew it, and it was wrested out of his hands, but not till after he had run its owner thro the body with it: that after this, a foreigner in the mob knocked the murderer down, in order that he should not escape: that

7

some

~~some~~ foreigners had carried off the servant's
 body : and that orders had arrived from court for
 the murderer to be tried instantly, and no favour
 shewn, as the person murdered was one of the
 principal attendants of the Spanish ambassador.
 ‘ Sir,’ says Raleigh, ‘ allow me to say that, tho
 ‘ I may be mistaken as to the officer^{ship} of the
 ‘ murderer, yet I know of a certainty, that all
 ‘ my other circumstances are strictly true ; be-
 ‘ cause I was a spectator of the whole transac-
 ‘ tion, which passed on that very spot opposite,
 ‘ where you see a stone of the pavement a little
 ‘ raised above the rest.’ ‘ Sir Walter,’ says the
 friend, ‘ upon that very stone did I stand dur-
 ‘ ing the whole affair, and received this little
 ‘ scratch in my cheek, in wresting the sword
 ‘ out of the fellow’s hand : and as I shall answer
 ‘ to God, you are totally mistaken.’ ‘ You
 ‘ grow warm, my friend, let us talk of other
 ‘ matters,’ said Sir Walter ; and, after some
 other conversation, his friend departed.

RALEGH took up the manuscript of the
 second volume of his history, then just com-
 pleted, ‘ How many falsehoods are here?’ said
 he. ‘ If I cannot judge of the truth of an event

' that passes under my eyes, how shall I truly
 ' narrate those which have passed thousands of
 ' years before my birth; or even those that
 ' have happened since my existence? Truth, I
 ' sacrifice to thee!' The fire was already feed-
 ing on his invaluable work, the labour of
 years: and he calmly sat till it was utterly
 consumed, and the sable ghost of the last leaf
 flitted up the chimney,

2 FROM this anecdote I illustrate an opinion,
 which I have always held, that there is no
 such thing as truth of fact, or historical truth,
 known to man. History is merely a species of
 romance, founded on events which really hap-
 pened; but the bare events as stated by chro-
 nologists are alone true; their causes, circum-
 stances, and effects, as detailed by historians,
 depend entirely on the fancy of the relater.
 Of other truths none are positive to man, save
 those subject to his senses; and even these are
 fallacious, tho the truths they affirm are posi-
 tive, *as to us*: to superior beings our truths are
 no doubt falsehoods,

FROM

of the *philosophical* *mathematical* *truths*
as to us *as to superior beings* *our truths are* *no doubt falsehoods*

From this observation, however, a certain species of truth, which consists in the relation and connection of things, must be exempted; providing this may be called positive truth. I mean, truth of nature, or that universal truth to be found in poetry and works of fiction. This consists in the propriety and consistence of event, of character, of sentiment, of language, to be found in such works. Want of such propriety and consistence always strikes even a common reader as *false* and absurd. Were Achilles, instead of fighting Hector, to fall on his knees, and beg for his life, the incident would strike every one as contrary to *truth* of character. I need not use any more instances to illustrate my meaning; tho I doubt you will think it rather an uncommon remark, that the whole truth known to man, and not subject to his senses, must be found only in works of fiction. Truth was not made for man, nor man for truth. He is the mere creature of falsehood: on falsehood depend his being, his passions, his happiness.

By the truth of nature, you will perceive, I mean that represented and imitated by art.
For

For when we say that an event or character drawn by a painter or poet is not *true*, is not *in nature*, we imply that art hath relinquished nature: art and nature are therefore, in this instance, almost synonymous terms; for we refer the representations of art to that idea of universal nature, which every mind acquires, in a greater or smaller degree, from being daily conversant in her works.

A CHARACTER may however be drawn out of the usual progress of nature, and yet have truth; as the Caliban of Shakspeare. In this, fancy, comparing certain ideas of utter rudeness of human nature, blended with the bestial and demonic: the two first drawn from real nature; the latter from a continuity of similar notions of these supernatural beings, handed down from ages of ignorance to ages of refinement, composes, from uniting these ideas, a certain standard of fitness and propriety of character, which is here applied instead of the grand standard of nature. This singular character is *true to itself*, offends no idea of propriety, yet is not in nature.

OF

Of truth of nature, taken in a large sense as applicable to the grand works of nature, man can only judge in so far as those concern him. It is the nature of the sun to produce heat, but, were it in time to possess the opposite quality, we could not say that *nature was false*, but that her effects varied. Were we told that the rays of the sun are essentially cold, but have the power to effect heat, we cannot prove the proposition wrong; we only judge from our feelings that the sun warms us: and the wisdom that would go further is folly; for any prerogative of nature that manifests not its existence to us, we may boldly say, hath no existence. The Herschelian planet certainly did not exist to us till it was discovered, tho it was ever an attendant of our system. How fit we are to judge of the truth of the works of nature, may be inferred from the sermon of the Cordelier, who desired his audience to admire the superlative wisdom and goodness of God, who always makes the greatest rivers to pass by the greatest cities.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

YOUR wonder at my assertion, that the modern stage and drama are superior to the ancient, I can only remove by supporting it with evidence. To begin with the theatre; that of the ancients consisted, like ours, of a semicircle, of which the chord formed the stage, behind which were conveniencies for the actors; and the semicircular part contained seats for the spectators. The ancient stage of the Greeks comprehended four divisions: the *λογεῖον*, where the reciters of the play stood; the *προσκύνιον*, where the actors of the play were stationed; the *θυμέλη*, where the chorus was placed to dance and sing; and the *ορχηστρα*, where, as with us, the musicians held their residence. The scene was always the same for each kind of drama. The tragedy had a scene consisting of a view of a public place, as the court of a palace, or the like area, surrounded with buildings of magnificent architecture.

chitecture. The comic scene always consisted of a public place of domestic architecture; and was commonly divided into three parts, by two streets opening up from it; so that the actors came down these streets to the audience: by this mean some passages in ancient dramas are accounted for, in which perhaps an actor expresses an ardent and repeated wish to see a person then on the stage; that person is then in the other street, and cannot be seen by the actor, tho he is by the audience. The scene of the *σαῦρον*, or farce, was always rural; as the satyrs, its constant chorus, were the fancied inhabitants of the woods. The whole machinery of the ancient scene consisted in changing it, as either of the dramas were designed for representation.

THE vast superiority of the modern scene for real representation, the grand object of the drama, is so evident, that, to insist on it, were to affront your judgment.

NEXT to the scene was the *προσκήνιον*, the *proscenium*, or place before the scene, as the name imports. In this the actors or mimics of the play

X play appeared. For you must know, that with the ancients, the acting of a play was quite a distinct province from the speaking or recitation. One set of actors spoke, while another accompanied them with proper gestures. As the last was thought the most important part of the drama, greater honour was paid to the mimics than to the reciters.

BELOW the προσκύμιον was the λοῖστῶν, where the reciters, above-mentioned, took their station. In this λοῖστῶν stood fellows with monstrous masks, contrived with such large gaping mouths, as if they meant to eat all the spectators, man, woman, and child, and leave none for to-morrow, as Lucian wittily tells us. These reciters, with the lungs of Therites, rehearsed the piece in musical cadence; while the music of the orchestra accompanied them, as it did the chorus when their turn came.

NEXT to this was the θυμέλη, or place of the chorus, whose province you well know: and next the audience, as with us, the ορχήστρα, where, with the Romans, the magistrates and chief men of the city had a superb seat appointed

pointed for them. The emperor's seat was in the midst of the orchestra, and called *podium*.

THE theatre of the Romans differed from that of the Greeks in some respects. For example, the *pulpitum* of the former, and *λογεῖον* of the latter, was sometimes in the Latin theatre of the same elevation with the *proscenium*: nay I question if they were not sometimes blended in one. The chorus was likewise, now and then, placed in the orchestra. The scene of the Romans was sometimes of amazing grandeur; that of the theatre of Marcius Scaurus being ornamented with 360 columns, and 3000 statues.

BOTH in the Greek and Roman theatre the spectators sat in uniform rows of stone seats, carried all round the semicircle. The multitude of their *vomitaria*, or doors, is however much to be envied; as, in case of accident from the number of candles, fireworks, &c. employed in our theatres, the smallness and fewness of the passages is shockingly cruel and absurd.

IN the ancient theatre plays were always represented in broad day; and sometimes four tragedies, one after another, all the work of one author when contending for the prize: while next day was set apart for as many of an antagonist. These strings of tragedies were called *τριλογία*, and *παραλογία*, *πραγμῶν δραμάτων*. Over the theatre, which was open above, in case of rain, or intense heat of the sun, a vast veil could be spread by means of easy machinery: this veil was sometimes of the finest silk.

SOME contend that the Romans were accustomed to change their scenes, during the representation of the same piece, from a misconception of this passage of Servius, in his notes on the third Georgic: *Scena quæ fiebat aut versilis erat, aut ductilis. Versilis tunc erat, quum subito tota machinis quibusdam convertebatur, et aliam picturam faciem ostendebat. Ductilis tunc, quum tractis tabulariis hac atque illac species picturæ nudabatur interior.* But this only applies to the change of scene for each drama, as above expressed; and as may be proved from this clear and positive passage of Vitruvius, in the eighth chapter of his fifth book. *Genera sunt scenarum tria. Unum quod*

quod dicitur tragicum, alterum comicum, tertium satyricum. Horum autem ornatus sunt inter se dissimiles, disparique ratione: quod tragicæ deformantur (beware of translating this *deformed*: it means in the classic Augustan Latin of Vitruvius *formed of, formantur de*, as a monk would have phrased it) *columnis, fastigiis, et signis, reliquisque regalibus rebus. Comicæ autem ædificiorum privatorum et menianorum habent speciem, perspectusque fenestris dispositos communium ædificiorum rationibus. Satyricæ vero ornantur arboribus, speluncis, montibus, reliquisque agrestibus rebus, in topiarii operis speciem deformatis.* From this you see that there were only three changes of scene in every ancient theatre; and these adapted solely to the different grand kinds of the drama.

NEED I descend to particulars, to evince the superiority of the modern stage to the ancient, after this genuine description of the latter, drawn from its contemporaries? Must not the whole representation of the ancients have heaped absurdity upon absurdity? The mute action of the mimics; guided by the voice of the reciters, conveyed thro tubes of brass; and

set

set off with a masque; the one side of which expressed grief, and the other complacency; so that the actor must remember to turn his sad side to the spectators at the proper minute. The unnatural declamation accompanied with music. The chorus dancing and singing at the intervals, &c, &c. &c. How superior is the natural heatness of our dramatic exhibitions, which represent life itself, to the uncouth magnificence of the ancients! To dwell longer on this were needless, so I shall pass to the consideration of the drama itself. To begin with tragedy.

THE fable of ancient tragedy is, in comparison with ours, amazingly barren and jejune. Milton's Sampson is a true picture of most ancient tragedies; and we all know what a yawning figure this would make on our stage. In most of their pieces there is but one incident, and that contrived with little art; as in the Edipus Coloneus, where the personages exchange a number of speeches, and then one of them dies. The only art of the author lies in summoning topics of verbal commiseration. The Edipus Tyrannus is indeed an exception; but

but the horror of the events is too strong, and disgusts the mind, instead of attracting its sympathy. This remark affects not however the art of the author; which must be allowed great, notwithstanding that the tradition or narrative, upon which his piece stands, must have helped him in every particular. But, if art is the chief merit of tragedy, then is *The Mourning Bride* the first of modern tragedies; as indeed it is pronounced by a Scottish critic, who in poetry knew not the best from the worst. Nothing spoils a tragedy more than an intricate plot; for no passion can be raised where the judgment always intervenes.

IN contrast, the modern tragedies seldom have an implex fable; but abound with life, action, incident. They interest without perplexing; and never push the tragic passions to horror and disgust. The chorus likewise destroyed the whole moral effect of tragedy, by thinking for the spectators, who in that case never think for themselves. Modern tragedies are far better calculated to mend the heart and manners than the ancient: domestic tragedies, the most moral and pathetic of all, being ut-

terly unknown to the ancients; who thought that we could not cry, except when her majesty was a blubbering. The characters and language of our tragedies must, of consequence, be more various and interesting.

X If in tragedy we excel the ancients, still more in comedy and farce. Of the Greek comedy of Aristophanes let those speak who have discovered that dung ceases to stink because it is Athenian. Certainly a meaner or dirtier scribbler never disgraced any country than that ancient buffoon: he is so totally without merit, that to take the trouble of expressing supreme contempt for him, is paying him too great honour. What has preserved his pitiful works? Style: almighty style! Of the comedies of Philemon and Menander, we have many fragments which shew the insipid morality with which they were fraught. Our sentimental comedy is a mere joke to them for soporification. The comedies of Terence are translations from theirs; and we see how totally destitute they are of the *vis comica*; so much so as even to disgust the ancients themselves; witness these verses of the great Cæsar, preserved by Suetonius:

Tu quoque, tu in summis, O dimidiare Menander,
 Poneris; et merito, puri sermonis amator;
 Lenibus atque utinam scriptis adjuncta foret vis
 Comica, ut æquato virtus polteret honore:
 Cum Græcis neque in hac despectus parte jaceres:
 Unum hoc maceror et doleo tibi deesse, Terenti.

Intricate plot, and artificial ligature of scenes, we find in Terence: but every thing else is wanting: character, situation, incident, wit, humour, laughter, gaiety: indeed, the whole of that by which comedy is comedy: His dramas, in short, are dramas for mathematicians.

THE superiority of our farce to the ancient need not be remarked, after the account I lately sent you of the latter. The chorus; its consisting always of satyrs, &c. are manifest shackles which bound down the ancient farce in the dungeon of dulness.

THE duration of the ancient tragic drama I have already pointed out, as shorter, and preferable to ours: perhaps you will say, that the want of incident authorised the brevity of the Greek tragedy. But you will remember that I took my instance from the *Edipus Tyrannus*, a play that hath sufficient incident for a modern

drama. Since I wrote to you on the duration of the drama, I have found the following passage in Cicero, which leads me to think that the ancients considered the drama as restricted to three acts. It is in the first book of his Letters *Ad Quintium Fratrem*, and runs thus: *Illud te ad extremum oro et hortor ut, tanquam poetæ boni, et actores industrii solent, sic tu in extrema parte et conclusione muneris, ac negotii tui, diligentissimus sis: ut hic tertius annus, tanquam tertius actus, perfectissimus atque ornatissimus fuisse videatur.* I think this proof positive, and sincerely believe that little Horace, like a Sabine puppy, was impudent enough to prescribe an absolute rule of poetry from his own skull; and that we poor moderns are so weak as to reverence his *ipse dixit* as an oracle, which for foundation hath not the shadow of a dream.

GRAVINA, in his book *Della Tragedia*, to which I am much obliged, hath well shewn that Aristotle's work on poetry is a crude and indigested performance, written by the author in his silly vanity of dictating in every science then known to man. Indeed, both Victorius and Castelvetro agree with him, that this treatise

tise of Aristotle is full of gross improprieties and absurdities, that could only proceed from an author's writing on a subject he knew nothing of. The book of Longinus on the Sublime is the second ancient work of criticism that hath reached us; and in it the Sublime is confounded with the Beautiful and the Tender, qualities of writing directly opposite. So that little can be said of the perfection of ancient criticism.

You see I use the privilege of epistolary writing; and give you my thoughts as they rise, without studying arrangement. I hope, however, I do not go to play till after I have done my business; and you know that of this Letter was to shew the superiority of the modern drama to the ancient: a point which I hope I have proved to a demonstration almost mathematical.

LETTER XXXIII.

BOILEAU, a writer of the meanest talents, whose genius was imitation, and whose taste was envy, hath said in some one of his feeble labours, that he prefers the gold of Virgil to the tinsel of Tasso. Now the joke is that Boileau *did not understand one word of Italian!* as Voltaire tells us in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.* Admire the fellow's impudence! How impudent ignorance always is! As France at that period led the fashions of England, both mental and corporeal, it is no wonder that Addison, one of the best writers and worst critics in the world, shut his eyes, and followed the French *petit-maitre en critique.*

ADDISON, I am convinced, never read Tasso's *Gierusalemme*; as I think it hath lately been pretty well proved, that he never read the *Aminta*. Had he perused the works of that wonderful writer, he would have blushed to challenge

challenge him for a fault which he never once is blameable of: Tasso hath instances of speech too figurative, but as little tinsel as Homer. He might, with equal propriety, have said that Milton's works teem with atheism.

IN Tasso I remember scarce one false ornament. The palace of Armida, tho the scene of enchantment, is not adorned with decorations of glass, but of diamond; as strong as it is brilliant. The bird which sings an amatory ditty, that image of the Gierusalemme which approaches nighest to the bounds of false ornament, hath in this view nothing unnatural: it is enchantment; it is beyond nature; and of consequence vindicable, nay modest, when considered in its proper point of light. Virgil's trees that groan and drop blood, without such an excuse, I allow tinfical and futile to the last degree. As to the language of Tasso, tho he wrote in a stanza which must have compelled him to redundancy, yet I pronounce it as grave and proper, with all its riches, as that of almost any Greek classic whatever, tho the Greeks laboured under no such inconvenience. It is the Latins, those apes clad in Grecian cloaths,

cloaths, whom we may safely accuse of tinsel or false ornament, both of images and language. Let us consider a few passages of Virgil, allowed their most judicious writer, in this view. I have never read his Eneid with this intent, as would be necessary to give a detail of all the tinsel of it, so can only give such passages as at present occur to my memory. Indeed I never look into Virgil but with utter disgust, while Homer always gives me fresh rapture.

I must premise, that we are not to wonder at Virgil's tinsel, for we know that Mecenas, whom we look upon as a model of taste, and who was Virgil's patron, was fond of tinsel to excess. Augustus used to rally him always on it, as we learn from Suetonius: and Macrobius hath preserved a part of a Letter from Augustus to Mecenas, running thus: *Vale mel gemmeum Medullæ, ebur ex Etruria, laser Aretinum, adamas supernas, Tiberinum margaritum, Cilniorum smaragdæ, jaspis figulorum, berylle Porsennæ, carbunculum Italiæ, καὶ ἵνα συνήμῳ πάντῃ μαλαφίᾳ mæcharum.* Ah, Mecenas, what a poor Mecenas thou must have been!

IN the Eneid, Book II. The expression *ferit aurea sidera clamor* may justly be arraigned as tinfical, and of false brilliance. A cry *striking the golden stars* approaches much to glorious nonsense. A cry, a sound, cannot strike save organs of hearing, or of reverberation: striking the stars is a puerile hyperbole: the *golden stars*, a yet more puerile epithet, on an occasion in which their boundless altitude should have been the idea, if an epithet was necessary. The *sidera lambit* in the bombast description of Vesuvius is of the same family.

THE story of Polydorus, in the Third Book, is perhaps the most unnecessary piece of empty decoration to be found in the works of any writer ancient or modern.

IN Book VIII, Virgil gives the following receipt to make thunder :

Tres imbris torti radios, tres nubis aquosæ ;
Addiderant rutili tres ignis, et alitis austri,
Fulgores nunc terrificos, sonitumque, metumque,
Miscēbant operi, flammisque sequacibus iras.

‘ R. Three

‘ R. Three rays of a wreathed shower, three
 ‘ of a watery cloud. Add three of red fire,
 ‘ and of the winged south wind. Mix them
 ‘ up with terrible flashes, and with sound, and
 ‘ fear; and with anger and following fires.’

HAD this stood in any writer on whom our timid critics dared to exert their judgment, what laughter, what derision, of that tinsical author who could affront the judgment of his readers with such a *caput mortuum* of empty nonsense!

IN Book XII. the horses,

Qui candore nives antecirent, cursibus auras,
 furnish another proof of bad ornament, as doth the tree in Book II. which threatens its fellers, and threatens them by shaking its hair at them:

Hla usque minatur;

Et tremefacta comam concusso vertice nutat.

Perhaps at a leisure hour I may send you more instances; but these already adduced will, I believe, prove that tinsel was a quality of writing very well known to the Roman Imitator.

L E T T E R

LETTER XXXIV.

ANY observation or discovery, which tends to the improvement of our language, gives me particular pleasure: I therefore agree with you in your applause of Mr. Sheridan's remark, that the S, which abounds so much in the English orthography, hath very often the power of Z. Why should it not be written accordingly? Why not spell *hiz*, ~~uz~~, *her'z*; *enclozez*, *arizez*, &c. &c. &c.? I long to see that hissing letter as scarce in the language as possible.

THE English tongue is sufficiently strong, rich, and universal; musicalness and softness are the only qualities it wants. The greatest praise is therefore due to any writer who attempts to improve its melody. Upon many years accurate attention bestowed on our language, it appears to me, that it is to the consonant terminations that the harshness of our speech may be imputed. Some words of frequent
occur-

occurrence are also very rude; and twenty words of very common use will, if harsh, destroy the tone of a language; and, if uncouthly spelt, will, to the eye, which ought to be consulted in orthography full as much as the ear, injure the *form* of a whole language. Such foreigners find our *though, through, enough, rough, tough*, and all other words in *ugh*, *ughly-headed monsters*, to use Milton's orthography, which of themselves are sufficient to make our tongue pass for a dialect of the High Dutch. How are they surprized to find us pronounce *tho, thro, enuf, ruf, tuf!* and be at the expence of horrible gutturals, to make our language have a hottentot air, which gutturals we cannot pronounce! In poetry for many a century we have written *tho, thro*; and so they ought always to be spelt in prose by every person who hath any reverence for the eyes of his readers, the *o* in *thro* having the same sound as in *to, do*: but if any one chuses to spell *throu*, I have no objection. We should certainly write *ruf, enuf, tuf: brôte, thôte, nâte, &c.* Why write so many towns with *burgh*? do not we pronounce *bura*? A little ridicule of sciolists always attends the first introduction of a novelty
into

into language, tho it should be infinitely for the better ; but this one must put up with, in sure expectation of the praise of posterity, and that of enlightened judges of one's own time.

THE chief fault of our language is, that almost all its words end in consonants. The great point is to throw out every final consonant which we can. *Alway*, for instance, is the old spelling of *always*, and is better: *also* is, for the same reason, superior to *likewise*, which hath the sound of a consonant in its termination. I could also wish to see the old *fro* substituted in lieu of *from* ; the old *ne* for *nor* is better than its substitute. If the consonant cannot be rejected, we should at least soften it, if possible ; and never, for example, write *has*, *does* ; but *bath*, *doth*: the *th* is frequent in the Greek, and is quite melodious. Instead of *draws*, *views*, *plays*, *throws*, or even *draweth*, &c. I believe a wellwisher to the *tune* of our tongue will write *doth draw*, *doth play*, &c. to preserve such very few words as we have ending in vowel-sounds. The Greek and Latin, and the modern Italian and French, have not so many words ending in consonants as we by a great deal. A
matter

matter of regret to every admirer of the English language: and indeed had not fortunately our adverbs, for the most part, been taken from the French, with the fine vowel termination of *y*, but far better in the old spelling *ie*; as *namely, boldly, &c.* our tongue must have been still more sadly hurt by consonant-terminations. The great secret of writing melodious English is surely to draw into view every possible word which may terminate with a vowel.

COMMON phrases which are ungrammatical a good writer should ever avoid, tho they have high authority to support them. Such are *methinks, to-day*, and the like. Dr. Armstrong in his *Sketches by Launcelot Temple, Esq;* hath given us some just observations on our language. How the nonsensical phrase *subject-matter* should be still used, in spite of the ridicule he hath entailed on it, I cannot conceive. He observes that *betwixt* should never be used for *between*. To which let me add, that it is quite amazing to see an author, who hath ears and eyes, write *amongst*. Gray, tho he writes with melody, hath *amidst*! Are not *among* and *amid* English words? *Besides* for *beside* is liable
to

to the same objection. The diphthongs *æ* and *œ* are now unknown to our tongue, being transformed into *é*, and with great propriety. To words spoilt in our spelling may be added the preterite, &c. of some verbs. *I read, I have read your book*: do not we pronounce *redd*? and an eminent writer in his familiar letters spells it *redde*. The preterite of no verb should be the same with the present, else inexplicable confusion will arise: but barbarians have formed our tongue, and men of science are afraid to meddle with it; else why not write *hurted* as well as *parted*, &c. &c. &c. However, a writer of any precision or elegance, will ever write *did hurt*, &c. at least. Why should we spell *vanities*, &c. when the singular is *vanity*? The plural stood so when the word was spelt *vanitie*, and we retain it; tho the laziness merely of substituting one letter for two made some blockhead very improperly write *vanity*. Such is the progress of our language!

DR. LOWTH, in his Grammar, seems not to know what to make of *himself*. If we say *he came himself*, it is nonsense: if *he came his self*, it is not sense. I wish each of our Gothic

ancestors *themselves* had a drubbing to *himself* for inventing such words. We use *yourself* in every case; it would seem we should also say *their selves*, *his self*, in all cases: if we say *you yourself*, *of yourself*, *to yourself*, *yourself*, O *you yourself*, *by or with yourself*; we must of course say *they themselves*, *of themselves*, *to themselves*, *themselves*, O *they themselves*, *by or with themselves*: and *he his self*, *of his self*, *to his self*, *his self*, O *he his self*, *by or with his self*. *Self* in old English is synonymous with *same*, as *selve day*, *selve colour*.

It is mortifying to every judge of language, who must know that the melody and elegance of a tongue depend altogether upon its vowel terminations, to reflect that in English not above a dozen common words end in *a*; as *villa*, *idea*, *piazza*, *era*, *quota*, *stanza*, and one or two more: *lea*, *plea*, *sea*, &c. do not sound as if they ended in *a*. In *e* not one word ends: nor in *i*! In *o* about two dozen; as *go*, *to*, *so*, *wo*, *lo*, *stucco*, *tobacco*, *calico*, *partico*, *do*, *cargo*, *echo*, *tho*, *who*, *intaglio*, *ratio*, *solo*, &c. Whoso I would recommend to succeed *whosoever*, as it preceded in antiquity; *whereto*, *hitherto*, are better

ter than any substitutes. In *u* we have no word whatever, and the Romans had very few: in *ou* we have only two, *thou, you*. In *y* we have no less than 4900 words, about an eighth of our language; our words amounting to about 35,000. Of this number I would propose that the *é* be restored to all the substantives: for instance, we should write *beauté, traité, ivoré, &c.* as from the French. In *w*, as a vowel, we have a few of the most sonorous words in our language, as *flow, blow, new, saw, law, &c.*

It is shocking to remark that we have 1683 words ending in *ess*, the most horrid of all terminations. This is owing to the qualified substantives in *ness*, as *holiness, happiness, &c.* most of which may be regarded as obsolete with all my heart, for we have *sanctitude, felicity, &c.* so that almost every one may be avoided, as they always are by good writers. But the negative *less*, the great cause of our other terminations in *ess*, cannot be so easily thrown out: yea a double *ss* is now necessary, for we can never write *endles, needles*, without confusion. What shall we say to *hopelessness, fearlessness*, and other delicious words? They may be in

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the language, but will never be in that of a master of it. By the way, if we wrote *z* instead of *s*, in many instances, we might even spell *needlez* without confusion arising from the plural of *needle*.

EVERY country schoolmaster, and compiler of grammars or dictionaries, will tell us that our language is classic and perfect. For lo! grammars have been written of it within these *twenty* years, so that it is stationary and *quite the thing*, and a very pretty thing it is. My dear friend, you know that our language is not yet one century old, as to orthography, the most essential point of any speech. Look into Milton's MSS. or his own editions, and you will see this at once. Now I will hazard a bold opinion, namely, that our language is now infinitely more barbarous, in all respects, than it was in the days of Chaucer. For melody there is no comparison; the *é* always pronounced, as in *spoké*, *shaké*, &c. was alone sufficient to render it much more melodious. It is truly risible to hear how we talk of our language. Did you never read of that village of Spanish *aborigines*, discovered by the duke of Alva's

Alva's hawk, who, being quite inclosed with rocky mountains, thought there was no world beyond their barriers? This is a lively type of our predilection for our native tongue; while, compared with the Italian or Spanish, it is harsh to excess. The emperor Charles V. we are told, said he would talk French to his friend, Italian to his mistress, and English to his horse. I suppose, by the bye, that, in observance of this apophthegm, our senators so much frequent the academy of Newmarket, in order that, by much conversation with their horses, they may be qualified to speak good English.

HOWEVER, it must be allowed, that if the English is too harsh, the Italian is too soft; and it will be easier to soften the English than to harden the Italian. The Spanish is not so rich as the English, and therefore is inferior. For the French, I know not what to call it. If we call it a language, it is as we call the droning of a bagpipe music. In pronunciation it is a nasal redundancy of gibberish: in writing — it must not be pronounced! Silent consonants, a phenomenon of nonsense unknown

known to any other tongue under heaven, either ancient or modern, have such an effect that not above twenty words in the language are pronounced as they are. In short, it is a language which the eye and the ear, is incapable of poetry, and disagreeable in prose; and yet the French have their *classics*! How this pitiful tongue hath become so prevalent, I cannot account; unless it be in accomplishment of the Scripture, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall be exalted*. The contest for superiority among the modern tongues (I speak without any shadow of prejudice) lies between the English and Italian.

Of these the English especially hath vast defects; and is capable of great improvements. But how shall these defects be removed, and how shall these improvements be given? Very easily. We know, from the pillar of Duillius, that the Latin was, in the time of the second Punic war, as barbarous as the English is now; yet, in little more than a century afterward, the language of Cicero appeared. Here is the point: in Greece and Rome, men of science,
refined

refined and fixed the tongues: in England the barbarous blockheads of the lowest mob have corrupted and degraded the language, and it is a ridicule for a man qualified to judge of it, even to give a new spelling! In France, the speech which was thought fixed, hath gone thro innumerable changes even in the tenses of verbs; such as *etait*, *avait*, &c. used within these twenty years for the old *etoit*, *avoit*, &c. Milton, in most of his works, adopted the old orthography of English, in contempt of the mob of sciolists, as he calls them; men who know nothing, yet judge of every thing, without being capable of examining, or going further than they did at school. But since his time no writer hath had courage to bear up against the vulgar; and the consequence is that the head follows the tail.

THE plan would be, my friend, that the king should incorporate one hundred, or indeed all, of the most learned men in the kingdom: or they should associate themselves, under the name of *The Academy for Improving the Language*. The great intent should be to soften and tune the English speech as much as possible: new

modes of spelling, and new uses of vowels ought to be adopted. The Academy should publish a grammar and dictionary, in which the new orthography should be used: and all the members, and indeed all the *literati* in the kingdom, should unite to assert their proper power over the mob. I am convinced, that in Rome the written language of the vulgar was quite different from that of the learned, till a century after Cicero. In ancient Greece, and in modern Italy, the colloquial dialects varied in journeying over every ten miles: in both countries the written language of the *literati* consists of flowers taken from all these dialects. Had we a scientific language also, it were an admirable institution. And perhaps a thousand years hence, when the British power may be no more, the language would survive: an event which, it may be feared, cannot be effected even by Milton and Shakspeare, if the speech remains in its present rude state. I do not mean that our scientific language should be indebted to our different dialects, as the Greek and Italian; for I know not of one Scoticism, Iricism, or provincialism, which would contribute in the least to the elegance of our tongue.

The

The sole intention should be to improve our orthography, and give us a number of vowel-terminations. The *é* should, in particular, be always pronounced as in *the*: the Germans pronounce it; and, were not their speech full of gutturals, the consequence would be that it would, from this very circumstance, prove more melodious than the English. I look upon the Greek as the most perfect language, both for strength and melody, that ever was known: now in Greek I have found that the vowel terminations of words taken as they run in any book, are equal to one third of the language. In English the vowel terminations amount but to one fourth of the language; it follows that we want vowel terminations for about 8000 words. How are they to be supplied? suppose

a for all plurals instead of the *s*; *pena* for *pens*; *papera* for *papers*, &c. this would alone furnish us with a sufficiency in *a*. This seems the Islandic plural in many cases, *skipa* for *ships*, &c, and is thus quite consonant to the genius of our language, which is of northern parentage.

é should be given to all substantives in *y*, as *beauté*, *bounté*, &c. and should always be pronounced

nounced in finals as *famé, sparé, moré, gract,* &c. as of old. The *ie* should go to all verbs in *y*, as *beautifie, &c.*

i is a termination unknown to our present tongue, tho' anciently common. Give it to all adjectives in *y*, as *bealthi, wearri, &c.* The adverbs in *y* ought alone to retain it, as *freely, fully, &c.*

o is a fine close, and is very rare in our tongue. Suppose it given to all substantives ending in harsh consonants: such as those in *b*, *crabo, flabo, webo*; and in *c*, *the publico, &c.* To all substantives in *d*, as *commando, &c.* we have a vast number of terminations in *d*; and a great part will yet remain, and may, for it is not a very harsh close. The *f* is the Greek ϕ , and we have not many words ending in it, so that no alterations need be made. *g* is a harsh close, save in the very musical *ing* of our participle present, &c. Substantives in *g* should take the *o*, as *flago, eggo, &c.* The *ch* is shocking, and chocking, and throwing out the *b*, is entitled to *o*, even in adjectives, as *beeco*, for *beech*; *rico*, for *rich*, &c. Our other words in *b* may stand; the *ish*, in particular, is pleasing, as *standish, a flourish, &c.* The *ck* is horrid, and must omit
the

the *k* in every instance; and take the *o* in all adjectives and substantives, as *quaco, faco, &c.* The *rk* must take the *o*. The *l* is an exquisite final, and we have happily a great number. The *m* is bad: let all substantives take the *o*, as *epigramo, &c.* The *n* is not unpleasing, the *ion*, in particular, is excellent. All substantives in *p* must take the *o*, as *carpo, cupo, &c.* To *r* and *s* nothing should be given that can be avoided: give all substantives the *o*. Substantives in *t* should all take the *o*, as *facto, &c.*

By these alterations, and giving the plurals in *o*, great melody might be produced; which, tho' uncouth at first, would in half a century become familiar and elegant. The possessive *s*, one of the greatest disgraces of our language, ought to be kicked out. But how supply its place? The *of*, or the *belongeth*, may supplant it in every possible instance; for examples, *It is hers*; *It belongeth to her*: *Horace's works*; *The works of Horace*. In fact, the *of* alone is known to other modern languages as a possessive.

On the consonants I have no more to observe, save that our lexicographers are shockingly

ingly mistaken about the *ck*, which they call *quite English*, tho it is unknown till the latest times. In old writers we have *lak* for *lack*; *loc* for *lock*; &c. but never *ck*. That man need never go to a concert, or look at a picture, who can write *Publick*, *Gallick*, *Gothick*, &c. and I would praise him who should begin to write *ro~~ck~~* for *rock*, *tri~~ck~~* for *trick*, &c. Our dictionary-mongers are still more grossly ignorant with regard to *z*; the name of which they say is *izard*, that is, *s hard*! This dream must have occurred to some schoolboy at the very bottom of his form, and merits pity. The English name in every mouth is *azed*, and well expresses the sound of that fine consonant, which every reader of Italian knows to be delicious, and superior to that of any consonant, save *z*. It even bears repetition with more softness than *z* itself, as *grandezza*, *bellezza*, *morbidezza*. What shall then be said to those teachers who have discovered that it was *s hard*; harder than *s* itself! If such be the barbarism of writers on our language, what must be the barbarism of the language itself? If Charles V. talked of speaking English to his horse, when it had infinitely more vowels, and only one *s*, in words
to

to which the French stupidity of last century gave two, such as *happinefs*, &c. because the French forsooth wrote *grandesse*, &c. what would he say of it now? He would certainly say, he would only talk it to its lexicographers!

THE *z*, in fact, is as much superior to the *s* in sound, as the soothing *buz* of a bee is to the horrid *bifs* of a serpent. The sound made by the bee is an eternal continuation of that of *z*; and hath been reckoned very pleasing by all poets, from those who listened to the bees of Hymettus, down to Milton.

While the bee with honied thie,
That at her flowry work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such concert as they keep,
Entice the dewey feather'd sleep.

IL PENSOROSO.

The *bifs* of a serpent or goose, which hath the *s* hard, is quite the reverse of pleasing.

THE division of inanimate objects into male and female genders is an absurdity from which our tongue is happily free, tho it pervades almost all other languages, ancient and modern. But,

to

to render our speech quite perfect, the very natural and necessary accommodation of the adjective to the substantive, in plural and singular, ought to be adopted. Such as, sing. *a bad pen* ; plur. *bada pena* ; bad pens.

As I know that it is impossible to tire you in treating a subject, which is so very interesting to every Englishman, I shall beg leave to subjoin a paper of the Spectator, in the improved language which I would propose.

SPECTATOR, N^o 159.

WHEN I waz at Grand Cairo, I picked up several orientala manuskripta, whica I havé still by me. Among othera, I met with oné entitulen, Thea Visiona of Mirza, whica I havé redd ové with great pleasuré. I intend to givé ito to the publico, when I havé no other entertainmento fo them ; ando shall begin with the first vision, whico I havé translaten wordo for wordo az followeth.

On the fift day of the moon, whico, according to the customo of mya foréfathera, I
alway

alway keep holi; aftero having washen myself, ando offeren up mya morninga devotiona, I ascended thea hilla of Bagdat, in ordero to pas the resto of the day in meditation ando prayero. Az I waz heré airing my self on thea tops of thea mountaina, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanité of human life; ando passing fro one thôte to anothero: Surely, said I, man iz buto a shadow ando life a dreamo. While I waz thuso musing, I cast mina eyea towardo the summito of a rock, tha waz noto faro fro me, whéré I discovered one in the habito of a shepherdo with a litel musical instrumento in hiz hando. Az I looked upo him, he applied ito to hiza lipa, and began to play upo ito. The soundo of ito waz exceeding sweet, and wrôte into a varieté of tuna tha wére inexpressibly melodiousa, ando alto differenta fro any thing I had evé heard. They put me in mindo of those heavanlia airs tha aré playen to thea departen soula of good men, upo their first arrival in paradisé, to wear out thea impressiona of theira lasta agonea, and qualifie them fo thea pleasurea of tha happi placé. My hearto melted away in secret rapturea.

I HAD

I HAD been ofté told tha the roco befo mē waz the haunto of a genius, ando tha several had been entertainen with musico who had pasen by ito, buto nevero heard tha the musician had befo maden his self visibel. When he had raisen mya thôtea by thosē transporting aira whica he played, to tasté thea pleasurea of hiz conversation; az I looked upo him liké onē astonishen, he beckoned to me, ando, by the waving of hiz hando, directed me to approach thé placé whéré he sat : I drew nearo with tha reverencé whico-iz due to superior naturé; ando, az my hearto waz entirely subduen by the captivating straina I had heard, I fell downo ato hiza feet, ando weeped. The genius smiled upo me with a looko of compassion ando affabilité, tha familiarized him to my imagination; ando ato oncé dispelled alla thea feara ando apprehensionsa with whica I approached him. He lifted me fro the groundo; ando, taking me by the hando, Mirza, said he, I havé heard thee in thya soliloquea, follow me.

He theno led me to the hiest pinnacle of the roco, ando placing me on the topo of ito : Cast thina eyea eastwardo, said he, ando tell me wha thou

thou seezt. I see, said I, a hugé valley, ando a prodigiouz tidé of watero rolling thro ito. The valley tha thou seezt, said he, iz the valley of miséré; ando the tidé of watero tha thou seezt iz parto of the great tidé of eternité. Wha iz the reazon, said I, tha the tidé I see riseth ou of a thic misto ato oné endo; ando again lozeth it self in a thic misto ato the other? Wha thou seezt, said he, iz tha portion of eternité whico iz callen timé, measuren ou by the sun, ando reacing fro the beginning of the worlde to the consummation of ito. Examiné now, said he, this sea tha iz thuso bounden with darkné ato botha enda, ando tell me wha thou discoverezt in ito. I see a bridgé, said I, standing in the mido of the tidé. The bridgé thou seezt, said he, iz human lifé; consider ito attentively. Upo a moré leisureli survey of ito, I found tha ito consisted of three-scorá ando tena entira archea, with several broken archea, whica, adden to thosé tha weré entira, madé up the numero abou an hundred. Az I waz counting thea archea, the genius told me tha this bridgé consisted ato first of a thousand archea, buto tha a great flood sweeped away the resto, ando left the bridgé in the

ruinouz condition I now beheld ito. Buto tell me further, said he, wha thou discoverest on ito? I see multitudinea of peopel passing ové ito, said I, ando a blac cloud hanging on eaco endo of ito. Az I looked moré attentively, I saw fveral of the pasengera dropping thro the bridgé into the great tidé tha flowed underneath ito; ando upo further examination, perceived theré weré innumerabela trapo-dora tha lay concealén in the bridgé, whica thea pasengera no sooner trod upo buto they fell thro them into the tidé, ando immediately disappeared. Thesé hidden pito-falla weré set very thica ato the entrancé of the bridgé, so tha thronga of peopel no sooner broké thro thea clouda buto mani of them fell into them. Thei grew thinnera towardo the middel; buto multiplied, and lay closera togethero towardo the endo of thea archea tha weré entira.

THERE' weré indeed soma persona, buto their numero waz very small, tha continued a kind of a hobbling marco on thea broken archea; buto fell thro, oné aftero anothero, being quité tiren ando spent with so long a walko.

I PASSE D.

I PASSED some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structuré, ando the great varitie of objecta whica ito presented. My hearto waz fillen with a deep melancholé to see several dropping unexpectedly in the mido of mirth ando jollité, ando catching ato every thing tha stood by them to savé theirselva. Some weré looking up towardo the heaven, in a thôteful posturé, ando in the mido of a speculation stumbeled and fell ou of site. Multitudea weré very busia in the pursuito of bubbela tha glittered in theira eyea ando danced befo them, buto ofté when thei thôte theirselva within the reaco of them, their footing failed, ando dow thei sank. In this confusion of objecta, I observed some with scymetera in theira handa, ando othera with urinala, who rau to and fro upo the bridgé, thrusting several persona on trapo-dora, whica did noto seem to lie in their way, ando whica thei mîte havé escapen, had thei noto been thuso forcen upo them.

THE genius, seeing me indulgé myself in this melancholi prospecto, told me I had dwel-
len long enuf upo ito. Také thina eyea offo
the bridgé, said he, ando tell me if thou yeto

seezt any thing thou dozt noto comprehend. Upo looking up; wha mean, said I, those greata flîtea of birda tha aré perpetually hovering abou the bridgé, ando settling upo ito fro timé to timé? I see vulturea, harpya, ravena, cormoranta, and, among many othéra featheren creaturea, several litela wingen boya tha perc in greata numbera upo thea middela archea. Thesé, said the genius, are envé, avaricé, superstition, despair, lové; with the lika carça, ando passiona, tha infest human lifé.

I HERE' fetched a deep sigh: alas, said I, man waz madé in vain! how iz he given away to miséré, ando mortalité! torturen in lifé, ando swallowen up in death! The genius, being moven with compassion towardo me, badé me quit so uncomfortabel a prospecto. Look no moré, said he, on man in the first stage of hiz existencé, in hiz setting ou fo eternité, buto cast thine eye on tha thic misto, into which the tide beareth thea several generationa of mortala tha fall into ito. I directed my site, az I waz ordenen, ando whethero oro no the good genius strenthened ito with ani supernatural forcé, oro dissipated parto of the misto
tha

tha waz befo too thic fo the eye to penetraté,
 I saw the valley opening ato the further endo,
 ando spreading forth into an immensé ocean,
 tha hād a hugé roco of adamanto running thro
 the mido of ito, ando dividing ito into two
 equala parta. Thea clouda still rested on oné
 half of ito, insomuco tha I could discover no-
 thing in ito. Buto the other appeared to me
 a vast ocean planten with innumerabela ilanda
 tha weré coveren with fruita ando flowera, ando
 interwoven with a thouzand littela shining seaa
 tha ran among them. I could see persona drest
 in gloriouza habita, with garlanda upo theira
 heada, pasing among the treea, lying dow by
 thea sidea of fountaina, oro resting on beda of
 flowera; ando could hear a confusen harmoné
 of singing birda, falling watera, humana voicea,
 ando musicala instrumenta. Gladné grew in
 me upo the discoveré of so delîteful a scené.
 I wished fo thea winga of an eagel, tha I mîte
 flie away to thosé happia seata; buto the ge-
 nius told me theré waz no passagé to them
 excepto thea gatea of death tha I saw opening
 everi momento upo the bridgé. Thea ilanda,
 said he, tha lie so fresha ando greena befo thee,
 ando with whica the wholé facé of the ocean

appeareth spotten, az faro az thou canzt see,
 aré moré in numero than thea sanda on the
 sea shoré: theré aré myriada of ilanda behind
 thosé whica thou heré discoverest, reacing
 furthero than thine eye, oro even thine imagi-
 nation, can extend it self. Thesé aré thea
 mansiona of good men aftero death; who, ac-
 cording to thea degreea ando kinda of virtue in
 whica thei excelled, aré distributen among
 thesé severa ilanda, whica abound with plea-
 sura of differenta kinda ando degreea, suitabela
 to thea relishta ando perfectiona of thesé who aré
 fettelen in them: everi iland iz a paradizé ac-
 commodaten to thea respectiva inhabitanta of
 ito. Aré noto thesé, Mirza! habitationa wortha
 contending fo? Doth lifé appear miserabel, tha
 giveth thee opportunita of earning fuco a re-
 wardo? Iz death to be fearen tha will convey
 thee to so happi an existencé? Think not man
 waz madé in vain, who hath fuco an eternité
 reserven fo him. I gazed with inexpressibel
 pleasuré on thesé happia ilanda. Ato lenth,
 said I, shew me now, I beseech thee, thea secreta
 tha lie hidden undé thosé darka clouda whica
 cover the ocean on the other sidé of the roco
 of adamanto. The genius making me no an-
 swero,

awero, I turned abou to addres myself to him
 •second timé, buto I found tha he had left me.
 I theno turned again to the vision, whico I
 had been so long contemplating, buto, instead
 of the rolling tidé, the archen bridgé, ando
 thea happia ilanda, I saw nothing buto the
 long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep,
 ando camela, grazing upo thea sidea of ito.

I AM sensible that the uncouth appearance
 of many of the new-modified words in this
 specimen, will make you smile; but, as The-
 mistocles said to the Spartan general, *Strike but
 bear me*: so say I, *Smile but bear me*. Had
 Chaucer obtained a prophetic glimpse of our
 present language, perfect as we think it, how
 he would have laughed! Ridicule is indeed so
 far from being the test of truth, that no person
 or object in nature is not capable of being
 viewed in a ridiculous light. Montesquieu
 observes, that women, whose understandings
 are generally weak, are the supreme and im-
 mediate judges of ridicule. Indeed we all
 know, that women and children are the very
 first to perceive any thing ridiculous in a per-

son or incident; which is of itself a certain proof that ridicule may be defined to be, *the effect of an odd sensation, produced in very weak minds, by the grotesque representation of things, which their own feeble or distorted faculties occasion.* And it is a certain fact, that the weaker and the more minute any mind is, the more it is prone to ridicule; for we always observe, that one fool is the readiest to find out and expose another.

I MAKE these remarks merely to guard you against trying me by the laws of ridicule; for, if so, you may laugh, and I will think, and let us see who will get the better in the end. For nothing is so manly as to ridicule ridicule, which is itself the most ridiculous thing in the world; and I even admire Mr. Gray's plan of wearing mustachios for a considerable time, to shew that he despised every possibility of ridicule.

AFTER this protestation, I shall beg leave to offer a few observations more, on this very interesting subject.

THE

THE number of words in the Greek language is about 30,000; in the Latin, about the same. By *words* I understand those put as distinct words in dictionaries.

OF modern languages, the Italian hath about 35,000; the French, about 32,000; the Spanish, about 30,000. The English hath about 35,000: Johnson's Dictionary hath upwards of 40,000; but of these 5000 are obsolete, or never used; and all his words from Sir Thomas Brown, and other pedants, ought to have been omitted. The joke is, that with him every body is an authority!

THE Greek language hath of vowel terminations one-third, or 33 words in 100.

THE Latin the same.

THE Italian nine-tenths, or 90 in 100.

THE Spanish, 66 in 100; or two-thirds.

THE English, 25 in 100; or one-fourth.

OF all these, you see the English comes nighest the Greek and Roman, even now, in vowel terminations; and in initial and medial
vowels

vowels they may be regarded as equal. The English is therefore at present the most perfect of modern languages even in sound.

BUT to give a language more perfect in melody than any yet seen, the number of consonant and vowel terminations ought to be equal. This the plan I have just proposed would effect to every possible degree.

DID you ever observe that *n*, *r*, and *t*, are so frequent in our tongue as, in a fount of letters, to require triple the number of almost any other consonant? The *r* is very harsh; and wherever any of them can be turned out, the better, tho the *t* be a very soft vowel, and the *n* hath a fine silver sound.

IT may strike you that the plural in *a* might have an effect like the supernumerary *a* in burlesque songs; as, *He was a gallant knight-a*, &c. But this very singularity of a superfluous vowel, unknown to other languages, proves that we want terminating vowels to the melody of our tongue; and that *a* is chiefly wanted.

LASTLY, most of the alterations in the specimen are not *innovations*, but *restorations of our ancient language*. SINCE

SINCE I am treating the improvement of language, give me leave to add a very few remarks on the present Greek characters used in printing, which are in a shocking state indeed.

ALDUS, and the other printers who first printed Greek, adopted at once the most barbarous characters then used by the Greek amanuenses. Hence the first Greek characters are worse than the Roman, tho the later are very unshapely. By a singular fatality the Roman character hath been improved, and brought to supreme elegance; while the Greek hath got worse and worse. The abominable contractions, which appear in almost every word of the first editions of Latin books, are now nowhere to be found. The more abominable contractions, and distorted letters, of the early Greek editions, still exist in all their glory!

COMMON sense! Common sense! what an uncommon thing art thou!

THE strange letters and contractions now used in the Greek, are no older than the tenth century, as may be seen in Montfaucon's
Palæ-

Palæographia Græca. They were introduced by most barbarous monks, in the most barbarous age; and we, more barbarous than the most barbarous, retain them! Before that period of deep ignorance, the Greek was all written in elegant and formal CAPITALS; of which fine specimens exist, such as the Alexandrian Old and New Testament in the British Museum, and others. After that, the Greek amanuenses, Καλλιγράφοι, as they called themselves, began to use small characters, in imitation of the copiers of Latin as would seem, and to study to unite them. They were ignorant that the genius of the Greek and Roman written character is quite distinct, and that he who attempts to bind the Greek letters to one another, will totally destroy any shadow of their form. This they might have learned from the very first attempts, as we observe in the epistle of a Byzantine emperor to a king of France, given in *fac simile* by Montfaucon, which resembles the Arabic much more than the Greek. Modern Greeks find it impossible to give a ligature to more than two letters in writing, and even then the form is injured: to write three without quite annihilating the character,

I will

I will venture to pronounce an impossibility. Some of these contractions and ligatures have been of shocking consequence to the sense of authors, as Montfaucon shews; and even now it takes a keen eye to discern between ς , ς , and ς , β . This strange jumbling of characters together, hath been one grand cause of the total barbarism in which we now see the Greek. Another grand cause arises from the horrible contractions. Now the joke is, that all these contractions are elongations! It will take a man far longer to write them than the letters they represent. They put me in mind of $\text{\textcircled{E}}$ for *et*, and of a contraction I have seen on a signpost in a village: ALEXANDERE BROWN. Yet to these blessed contractions and ligatures is it owing that the present Greek character is more ugly than that of any language whatever; tho at first it was as distinct and elegant as the Roman.

THE restoration of the Greek characters were very easy; and yet a printer would gain immortality by it. Let us see.

THE

THE present Greek capitals are ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ. Of these I only object to two, the Θ and Ξ; both of which hurt the eye very much, because the parts of them are detached and broken asunder. They occur of several forms in old Greek inscriptions and manuscripts; but I prefer those marked 1 & 2, in the little sketch annexed, which are much more pleasing to the eye: the Ω is far better in the form of fig. 3. as marking *o long*.

BUT it is in the small Greek alphabet that supreme improvements may be made; and I subjoin such a one as I think the best, after consulting many MSS. &c. on the occasion. The present ζ and ξ, in particular, are horrible apothecaries marks. For both I give their capitals with a slight variation in the former. It must be remarked, that the small Greek letter never admits of what letter-founders call a *ceriph*, or line across the terminations, as the Roman.

IN some books printed at Basil by *Curio* and others about 1540, an Italic Greek character appears

appears with much elegance, allowing for contractions and ligatures. This, if the printers please, may be called *Basil Greek*. As I think this variety would be as elegant and useful in the Greek as in the Latin and modern tongues, I have likewise given an alphabet of it. The twenty-four small Greek characters which I have given, I need hardly add will answer every possible use fully as well as the twenty-four common large Greek characters; or as all the contractions and ligatures in the world; tho as an eminent letter-founder informs me, they amount to about *three hundred even now in daily use!*

As to the Greek accents, every one knows that they are more useless, if possible, than the ligatures and contractions. The mark of aspiration ought alone to be retained and made of some *body*, and apart, as what is called a *superior* letter, in whatever form is most agreeable, for MSS. and printed books differ; but the best seems to be a small Roman [h] turned backward, as that marked 4. In the Alexandrian Bible, thought to be of the 4th or 5th century, the only note like an accent is a dot over the *ῥ*.
Nor

Nor can accents be traced higher than the 10th
 or 11th century, when they appeared along
 with contractions and ligatures. True it is
 that a Greek manuscript was lately found at
 Herculaneum with *accents*; that is, the acute
 accent was put *upon every vowel*. A practice
 just as rational as any other in this way. The
 Germans alone of all modern European na-
 tions, read the Greek by the accents; and say
 ἄνθρωπος for instance, not ἀνθρώπος; so that the
 power of the *omega* is lost, and it is confounded
 with *omicron*. Nay the modern Greeks all read
 by the accents, in which they shew total igno-
 rance of the Greek. Nor let this be wondered
 at, for who of us knows how Chaucer pro-
 nounced English? The slender *a*, so common
 in our language, is not so old as Elizabeth's
 time. Le Maurier, in his *Memoires de la*
Hollande, tells us, that Elizabeth pronounced
 French ill; saying, *maa foi*, and *paar Dieu*.
 A sensible antiquary observes, that now she
 would have said *mai foi*, and *per Dieu*. *Dance*,
France, with a thousand more words, in which
 the *a* slender now appears, were formerly
 written as pronounced, *Daunce*, *Fraunce*, &c.
 Nothing fluctuates so much as language; and
 he

he that looks for ancient Greek among the modern Greeks will find himself mistaken. They have altered the sound of almost every vowel; nay have gone so far as to give the *eta* the sound of *epsilon*, and the reverse. They say *αησω* for *αεσω*, and *μεν* for *μην*, &c.

By the bye, it is surprizing that not one Englishman, save Milton, seems to have discovered that the English pronunciation of the Latin is improper. The *a* in Latin is always broad; as is the *e*. The *i* has the power of our *e* slender. The Romans did not pronounce *satyetas*, but *sachietas*, &c. &c. &c. Milton ordered his daughters to read to him accordingly, as we find in his Life by Birch. Indeed, it is as absurd to read Latin in English as to read French so.

BEFORE I give you my Greek alphabet, which is not new, I assure you, but very ancient, I shall just observe, that one or two of the Latin characters might be improved, or rather restored. Such is the *a*, which would be far more elegant if given in the form used in writing. (See that marked *.) The small

T

belly

belly is very disagreeable to the eye; and the other would be far more round and beautiful. The g is still worse, and hurts the eye very much. It should be given as that marked †, or that with §. The other characters are very neat and pleasing. The dot over the i might however be spared, as quite unnecessary, and only serving to injure the beauty and regularity of the line. Printers seem at a loss for marks of annotation, and even those they use are getting more and more ugly; particularly the cross †, and double cross ‡, which have unfortunately been called *dagger*, and double-dagger; and some *learned* letter-founders have now begun to form them accordingly. The § is not a proper notation-mark, as it implies *section*, and is daily used in the true sense. The * is the only decent mark left; and this, like all the others, is made four times the size it should be. It is impossible to make those marks too small; for it is only necessary to see them, and every eye can see even a *point*. They ought always to be very minute, and *superior*. As I look upon the smallest parts of this superlative art as important, I annex some new marks of annotation, and the proper form of the cross and double cross.

Tho I wish to see variations for the better in the English language, yet, be assured, that there cannot be a variation, even for the better, in the sincere speech of friendship, with which I am, &c.

αβγδεζηθικλμνξοπρστυφψω

αβγδεζηθικλμνξοπρστυφψω

Ξηραίνωνενους εἰσεῖδε τοὺς ἰχθύας καὶ τὴν

Εἰπὼν σὺν αὐτοῖς ἐπιτίρδεις εὐ πᾶν.

Ξεναρχος Κωμικος Ποιητας εν τοις ξενομενοις.

Θ Ζ Ω

a g g

Heart • Diamond • Circlet • Rose • Billet • Pheon •

Trident • Anchor • Chain • Pomel • Fusil • Acorn • [††]

♥ ♦ ○ ◇ † ‡ § + ♣ ♠ [††]

LETTER XXXV.

YOUR observations on the various kinds of literary fame are curious. But there is one species which hath escaped you; and that is where an author writes in a style that might well give delight to the learned, and yet, by some strange chance or other, his reputation is only in the mouths of common readers. I have a singular instance of this to produce, in a poem which, I am confident, you never heard of, but which yet possesses a merit superior to that of many pieces of the very first celebrity. It hath passed thro eight editions from the year 1747, when it was published, to the present time; yet hath never been mentioned in any critical work whatever. The style is so much that of Shakspeare, that, had he written in this species of poetry, he could have adopted no other. To detain your curiosity no longer, this wonderful production is called **THE GRAVE, A POEM**, and is written by Robert Blair, who was an episcopal clergyman in Edinburgh.

As

As I am sure you have never seen it, I beg leave to lay before you some of its most beautiful passages, in order to raise your expectation to the highest, ere I send you the poem itself. I admire this poem so much, that I have procured most of the editions of it from the first to the last; they have various readings; and I will send you a copy with the most remarkable written on the margin. In the mean time, in copying my extracts, I have preferred the readings which I thought best.

Soon after a proper introduction, the following striking passage appears:

See yonder hallow'd fane, the pious work
Of names once fam'd, now dubious, or forgot,
And buried midst the wreck of things which were;
There lie interred the more illustrious dead.
The wind is up. Hark how it howls! Methinks
Till now I never heard a sound so dreary!
Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird,
Rook'd in the spire, screams loud: the gloomy aisles,
Black plaister'd, and hung round with shreds of
scutcheons,
And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound,
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,

The mansions of the dead. Rouz'd from their
slumbers,

In grim array the grizly spectres rise;

Grin horrible, and, obstinately sullen,

Pafs and repafs, hush'd as the foot of Night.

Again the screech-owl shrieks! ungracious sound!

I'll hear no more—it makes my blood run chill.

THE following picture is a very natural and
fine one:

Off in the ~~tone~~ churchyard at night I've seen,

By glimpse of moonshine chequering thro the trees,

The schoolboy, with his satchel in his hand,

Whistling aloud to bear his courage up;

And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones,

With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown,

That tell in homely phrase who lie below.

Sudden he starts and hears, or thinks he hears,

The sound of something purring at his heels.

Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind ~~him~~,

Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows;

Who gather round, and wonder at the tale

Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly, ~~go~~

That walks at dead of night, or takes ~~his~~ stand

O'er some new-open'd grave, and, strange to tell!

Evanesces at crowing of the cock.

This

This pleasing picture is finely contrasted by the following affecting one, which immediately follows it:

THE new-made widow too I've sometimes spy'd—
 Sad sight! slow moving o'er the prostrate dead:
 Listless she crawls along in doleful black,
 While bursts of sorrow gush from either eye;
 Fast falling down her now untasted cheek.
 Prone on the lowly grave of the dear man
 She drops: while busy meddling memory,
 In barbarous succession, musters up
 The past endearments of their softer hours,
 Tenacious of its theme. Still, still she thinks
 She sees him; and, indulging the fond thought,
 Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf;
 Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.

In the above description there are many minute strokes that infer the superior poet: *her now untasted cheek*; *She drops*: to adopt the sound to the action; *busy meddling memory*, an expression so perfectly Shaksperian, yet not of Shakspeare.

THE following passage is equal to any of the most admired moral parts of Shakspeare; and in the true manner of that wonderful dramatist:

DULL grave! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful
 blood,
 Strikest out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
 And every smirking feature from the face,
 Branding our laughter with the name of madness.
 Where are the jesters now, the men of health,
 Complexionally pleasant? Where the droll
 Whose every look and gesture was a joke
 To clapping theatres, and gaping crouds,
 And made ev'n thick-lipp'd musing Melancholy
 To gather up her face into a frite
 Before she was aware? Ah! fullen now,
 And dumb as the green turf that covers them!

THIS description is likewise purely and perfectly Shaksperian :

BUT see! the well-plum'd herse comes nodding on,
 Stately and slow, and properly attended
 By the whole sable tribe, that painful watch
 The sick man's door, and live upon the dead,
 By letting out their persons by the hour
 To mimic sorrow, when the heart's not sad.
 How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd,
 And glittering in the sun! Triumphant entries
 Of conquerors, and coronation pomps,
 In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
 Retard th' unwieldy show; while, from the casements,
 And houses tops, ranks behind ranks close wedg'd
 Hang bellying o'er.

Live

Live upon the dead is a pitiful antithesis; but Shakspeare would have used it.

ADMIRE this masterly passage:

Beauty! thou pretty play-thing, dear deceit!
That steals so softly o'er the stripling's heart,
And gives it a new pulse unknown before:
The grave discredits thee. Thy charms expung'd,
Thy roses faded, and thy lilies soil'd,
What hast thou more to boast of? Will thy lovers
Flock round thee now to gaze, and do thee homage?
Methinks I see thee with thy head laid low!
While surfeited upon thy damask cheek
The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes roll'd,
Riots unscar'd.

CONTRAST the above description with the following:

What groan was that I heard? Deep groan indeed!
With anguish heavy laden! Let me trace it:
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man,
By stronger arm now vanquish'd, gasps for breath
Like a hard-hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play! What now avail
The strong-built sinewy limbs, the well-spread
shoulders?

See

See how he toils for life, and lays about him
 Mad with his pain! Eager he catches hold
 Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard
 Just like a creature drowning. Hideous sight!
 Oh how his eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly!
 While the distemper's rank and deadly venom
 Shoots, like a burning arrow, thro his bowels
 And drinks his marrow up.—Heard you that groan?
 It was his last.

THE passage, on the death of the philosopher, is exceeding well; as is that on the physician, but I need not repeat every beauty: this stroke in the last is quite Miltonic:

From stubborn shrubs
 Thou wrung'st their shy retiring virtues out,
 And vex'd them in the fire.

THE sexton I must not forget. He is a brother of him in Hamlet, but far from a servile imitator:

See yonder maker of the dead-man's bed,
 The sexton, hoary-headed chronicle,
 Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
 A gentle tear. With mattock in his hand,
 He digs thro rows of kindred and acquaintance,
 By far his juniors. Scarce a scull's cast up

But

But well he knew its owner, and can tell
 Some passage of his life. Thus, hand in hand,
 The sot has walk'd with death twice twenty years:
 And yet 'no youngster on the green laughs louder,
 Or clubs a smuttier tale. When drunkards meet
 None sings a merrier catch, or lends his hand
 More willing to his cup. Poor wretch! he minds not
 That soon some trusty brother of the trade
 Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.

This comparison applied to time is Shakspeare again:

Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight thief,
 Who slides his hand under the miser's pillow
 And carries off his prize.

No simile can exceed the following for pastoral and elegant simplicity. Among the various tenants of the grave he enumerates

The long-demurring maid,
 Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
 Smil'd, like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
 Not to be come at by the willing hand.

I SHALL conclude with another simile of equal merit, near the close of the poem, which consists of about 800 lines. He is mentioning the aversion even of the good to death, tho they place eternal happiness as a certainty beyond it. So

So have I seen, upon a summer's eve,
 Close by the rivulet's brink, a youngster play:
 How wishfully he looks to stem the tide!
 This moment resolute, next unresolv'd.
 At last he dips his foot; but, as he dips,
 His fears redouble, and he runs away
 From th' inoffensive stream; unmindful now
 Of all the flowers that paint the further bank,
 And smil'd so sweet of late.

I CANNOT close my Letter without remark-
 ing, that there is no poem in which the verse
 and phrase of Shakspeare are so well followed in
 their very spirit as this. The diction is frugal
 and chaste; yet, upon occasion, highly poetical,
 without any appearance of research. In short,
 I recommend it to you, without hesitation, as
 one of the very first poems in the English lan-
 guage.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

A POET may doubtless be too much an antiquary, when treating an ancient subject; but he may likewise be too little so; and the last fault is the most common; tho both extremes are equally prejudicial. If a poet hath too little science of antiquity, his ignorance disgusts: and, if he hath, or rather shews, too much, his pedantry is nauseous.

THE study of antiquity hath always appeared to me very uncertain; more especially that relating to the ages before the Greek classics flourished, and after the Roman period of literature was succeeded by long centuries of gloomy ignorance. The strong light which the Greek and Roman authors cast around them, serves to expose the most minute custom to the eye: but in the night that succeeded, any object must be very large indeed if it strikes our view, till the morning of science again broke toward the beginning of the sixteenth century.

THE

THE period preceding the Greek classics is left to the full flight of the poet's imagination, providing he errs not against the *costume* of such nations as are described by ancient historians. The latter period, which is indeed the period of chivalry, when the feudal system gave new forms to society, confines the poet more; yet leaves a vast field for bold fiction.

THE customs and manners of feudal times were perfectly similar in most countries. The knight who traversed the wild heaths and mountains of Scotland, was the same in his armour, his manners, his pursuits, with him who paced over the fragrant vallies of Spain. They had travelled to the same courts, fought in the same tourneys; and perhaps adored the same mistress. Their castles were built much in the same manner, and alike situated on an insulated rock surrounded by a gloomy torrent, or on a commanding hill. The manners of the Spanish knight might be imputed by any poet, with strict propriety, to the Scottish; and the contrary. If such poet were to describe a castle in England or Scotland, and it turned out to be upon the French, Italian, or Spanish model, might

might it not be said with great justice, that there must have been many such castles actually existing; the founders of them having preferred such models to those of their own country? Are there not many peers in Great Britain, at this moment, who build their houses and live in every point after foreign fashions? Hence you see the absurdity of a poet's restricting himself too much to mere local antiquity; when fashion, caprice, and accident, are as ancient as any antiquities in the world.

INDEED, no science whatever proceeds upon such uncertain grounds, as that of the antiquities of the respective countries of the world, during the middle ages. Our authorities are those of romances, in which, for aught we know, customs may be described which had no real existence, on purpose to increase the marvellous; and those of historians of credulous faith, and mean information. Much scope is therefore left to the poet; and, if he errs not against the *costume* of greater notoriety, he is as likely to be right as any historian, or romance-writer of the times; for one will see objects more distinctly with a good telescope, tho

tho at some miles distance, than a person with bad natural organs of vision can upon the spot. If a poet, for instance, were to describe English cuirassiers at the battle of Azincour; tho some monkish historian were positively to say that there were none, I should prefer the poet's testimony to that of the cotemporary dunce; because we have no relation of that battle by any writer who was present; if there was such relation, the writer might have omitted the circumstance from spite at some officer of those cuirassiers, or from forgetfulness; or the relation itself might be altered and corrupted. If no faith is due, on such a particular point, to an eye witness, what is due to a monkish historian, who heard it from an old woman, who heard it from a serjeant who was at the battle? If a poet were even to describe the French king as charging our troops on that occasion with his men drawn up in the Grecian phalanx, who shall confute him? Is it not at least as probable as that there is in the British army a regiment of cavalry who wear helmets of Greek form? yet the last is a fact. Fortune delights to blend times and circumstances, as much as to alter them.

NOTHING

Nothing can be more risible than to see a professed antiquary, from some scrap of an ancient writer, deciding upon the manners and customs of a whole country and century: when perhaps the particular custom mentioned was confined to a dozen of people, and totally vanished in six weeks. I wish the Memoirs of Scriblerus had extended to the feudal times; that the vapid studies of the mere antiquary might have been as much exposed to ridicule in respect to those, as to the times of Greece and Rome.

U

LET

LETTER XXXVII.

YOUR detestation of modern Latin poetry cannot well exceed mine; yet, were all the works of it to be thrown into the fire, as you propose, there are one or two that I would risk burning my fingers to redeem. The *Basia* of *Secundus* would be one of these, and indeed the only entire work: in other authors I should be content with two or three select leaves. These leaves should be torn only from the poems of *Casimir Sorbiewsky*; with one leaf from those of *Menage*, tho not written by that author, being the fable of *Love and Folly*, by the *Pere Commire*. I would transcribe it, but it is rather long; and *Menage's* poems are not uncommon; so shall content myself with recommending it to your perusal, after observing that it is in the simple style of *Phædrus*, which you so deservedly admire. By the way here is a pretty French poem with the same title, tho of a very different subject. It is by the noted *Piron*; and, if you have not seen it, you will thank me for it.

L'AMOUR

L'AMOUR ET LA FOLIE.

J'avois juré d'être sage,
 Mais avant peu j'en fus las ;
 O Raison ! c'est bien dommage
 Que l'ennui suive tes pas !

J'eus recours a la Folie ;
 Je nageai dans les plaisirs :
 Le tems dissipa l'orgie,
 Et je perdis mes desirs.

Entre elles je voltigeai :
 L'une et l'autre se ressemble ;
 Et je les apprivoisai,
 Pour les faire vivre ensemble.

Depuis dans cette union
 Je coule ma douce vie.
 J'ai pour femme la Raison ;
 Pour maitresse la Folie.

Tour a tour mon gout volage
 Leur partage mes desirs ;
 L'une a soin de mon menage,
 Et l'autre de mes plaisirs.

How Vida came into reputation, is easily accounted for. Pope, a boy of eighteen, and consequently of little maturity of judgment, happened to light upon him at some dull hour

when insipidity itself appears bright; liked him, and praised him to the skies, in his Essay on Criticism. That work became popular, and there is the whole of the mystery. You know Pope loved modern Latin poetry so much as to publish the *Selecta Poemata Italorum*, in two volumes; a work that does still less credit to his critical abilities than his edition of Shakspeare.

I HAVE said that in my opinion (I will not say *bumble*, for that is a proud word) the *Basia* of Secundus, two, or at most three, odes of Casimir, and the fable of Commire constitute all the modern Latin poetry that merits preservation; and I have read the poems of Fracastorius, Amaltheus, Buchananus, Grotius, Heinsius, and all the men in *us*, as Moliere calls them, that ever scribbled; together with those of all the names in any other syllable whatever to the number of many hundreds. They are all so many carcases of the respective countries dressed in Roman habits. Behold a tolerable epigram upon those of Italy.

IN ITALOS POETAS RECENTIORES LATINE
SCRIBENTES.

Vatibus hic mos est Italis, ut mille smaragdos,
Ut mille intexant versibus astra suis:
Nil præter flores, aurum, marmorque loquuntur;
Nil radios præter luna-ve, sol-ve tuos.
Denique versiculis in Tuscis omnia bella,
Excipias ipsos si modo versiculos.

HAVE you read Casimir? I am pretty certain your contempt for Latin poetry has hindered you. At any rate allow me to send you one of his odes, indeed the very best, inasmuch that upon reading it, I do not wonder at the high opinion Grotius expresses of the author, namely, that he always equals, and often surpasses Horace. I shall beg leave to subjoin to it a translation of my own, upon a new plan, syllable for syllable, a little in the manner of Milton's translation of *Quis te puer gracilis sub antro*; save that Milton, and his followers in this stanza, have only adopted the mechanic form, not the syllabication, which I shall religiously preserve. Read, and admire.

AD SUAM TESTUDINEM.

Sonoræ buxi filia futilis,

Pendebis alta, barbiter, populo;

Dum ridet aer, et supinas

Sollicitat levis aura frondes.

Te sibilantis lepor halitus

Perflabit Euri: me juvet interim

Collum reclinasse, et virenti

Sic temerè jacuisse ripâ.

Eheu! Serenum quæ nebulæ tegunt

Repente cœlum? quis sonus imbrium?

Surgamus. Heu semper fugaci

Gaudia præteritura passu!

Now for the translation. Read and judge.

TO HIS HARP.

Sonorous daughter of the pliant boxen stem,

On the high poplar, O my harp, thou shalt depend;

While laughs the sky, and the gale

Softly revives the listless leaves.

The western wind will solicit with gentlest breath

The music of thy charming strings; I the mean while,

Loft in sweet ease, will recline

Along the green of this fair bank.

Alas! what sudden clouds invade the sunny sky?

What unexpected showers in sounding haste descend!

Let us be gone. Ah how soon

Will happiness still pass away!

In the original I do not like *testudinem*, *shell*, when it appears from the first line, to be made of box; nor the epithet *sutilis*, which implies *patched* or *sewed together*, not *capable of being wrought into musical or other instruments*, which must have been the author's idea; and which, perhaps, I have not strongly expressed by *pliant*. *Sibilantis* is unhappy, so I think is *collum*. The last stanza is faultless.

His sixteenth Ode of the Second Book is likewise fine; but not equal to this. How do you like this passage in Ode ix, Book III.? It is address to a lady.

Non indecoræ nube modestiæ
 Extinguis aurum, vilius aspici,
 Gemmasque nolentes latere
 Moribus ingenioque celas.
 Hinc inde rubris Creta coralliis;
 Illinc smaragdis fulguret India:
 Cum pura Virtus fulsit, omnes
 In tenebris latuere gazæ.

THE 15th Ode of the same Book, *Ad Apes Barberinas*, is extremely pretty. Here it is, for it is very short: *breve plerumque quod elegans*. I deny the apophthegm however, if applied *ad genus fœmininum*.

Cives Hymetti, gratus Atticæ lepos,
 Virginæ volucres,
 Flavæque Veris filia;
 Gratum fluentis turba prædatrix thymi;
 Nectaris artifices,
 Bonæque ruris hospita:
 Laboriosis quod juvat volatibus
 Crure tenus viridem
 Perambulare patriam,
 Si Barberino delicata principe
 Secula melle fluunt;
 Parata vobis secula?

Need I tell you that the arms of Urban VIII. of the house of Barberini, then the reigning pontiff, were three bees? Urban was himself no mean poet in the Latin way; and must have been much pleased with this fine allusion to his armorial bearing; indeed the happiest of the kind which I remember to have read.

THE eighteenth Ode of the Fourth Book, *Ad Rosam*, has been quoted by James Hervey, of religious memory. The full address is *Ad Rosam; quatannis kal. Junii Divæ Virginis caput coronaturus*. The two first stanzas are exquisite, if you except one line, the second of the second stanza, Chariots with four horses,

by

by the way, seem a favourite image of this writer, and spoil many of his personifications.

Siderum sacros imitata vultus,
Quid lates dudum, rosa? delicatum
Effer e terris caput, O tepentis

Filia coeli!

Jam tibi nubes fugiunt aquosæ;
Quas fugant albis Zephyri quadrigis:

Jam tibi mulcet Borean jocantis

Aura Favoni.

I moreover don't like *e terris*; roses never spring from the ground, but from the rosier. The rest, containing the religious part, is, as usual, foolish enough.

THE twenty-third of this Book, *Ad Cicadam*, is likewise elegant; but the idea is too similar to that of the superlative ode first produced.

WE may with propriety conclude our little treat from this writer with these lines of Ode 29. Book IV. After a prophecy of the future happiness of Poland, his native country, he tenderly closes thus;

———— tunc mea carmina

Discenda grandævi parentes

Virginibus puerisque dicent.

Frustra:

**Frastra: nam in urna surdus et immemor
 Jacet pulvis. Me tamen integræ
 Lauri coronabant jacentem, et
 Circum hederæ violæque serpent.**

In a word, had the judgment of Casimir Sorbiewsky equalled his imagination, he would have been one of the first lyric poets in the world.

Do not think, however, that when, in my enumeration of the very few modern Latin poems that merit praise, I omitted Mr. Gray's Ode, *Oh tu severi religio loci*, I meant to leave it in the flames. On the contrary, I know you would burn your Horace ere you would put it there. But beigh ho! I wish it had been in English, which would have saved me the trouble of putting it in a poor English dress, after the manner of my former translation of an Alcaic ode of Casimir. However, such as it is, you shall have it.

Oh thou, the stern religion of this severe place,
 By whate'er name thou lovest to be call'd, (for sure
 No mean deity must hold
 These native streams, and ancient groves:

And

And more is seen the presence of some awful god
 Amid those pathless rocks, and uplands wild,
 Broken cliffs, and raging streams,
 And horrors of the woody night:

Than beneath the citron roof if pompously shrin'd,
 In luxury of gold he shone, and Phidian art :)
 All hail ! hear my rev'rent vows !
 Indulge with rest my weary youth !

Oh if cruel fortune forbids me to enjoy,
 The much I wish in vain, thy seats of calm delight,
 And law of holy silence ;
 Resorbing me in violent waves.

At least, Oh father ! grant me, in some nook remote,
 To wear away the free hours of my peaceful age ;
 Secure from vulgar tumult
 Conceal'd by thee, and human cares.

THIS exquisite Ode is by no means in the
 Alcaic measure, which Mr. Gray seems to have
 intended it for. The Alcaic measure, as used
 by Horace, consists of six feet, or twelve syl-
 lables, in the two first lines ; three feet and a
 half, or seven syllables, in the third ; and four
 feet, or eight syllables, in the fourth. But
 what occasion is there to restrict modern poets
 to ancient measures, tho' writing in an ancient
 tongue,

tongue, when they may use what measures they please in modern languages? Are not the stanza and construction of Mr. Gray fully as harmonious to our ears as those of Horace? The rest is pedantry. Yet I remember to have once had a dispute with the first of our living poets upon this very topic: but as we could not use the *ratio ultima regum*, and thought it below us to lay wagers, having the fear of Hudibras before our eyes, the fire went out after we had exhausted our fuel.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

I SHALL now beg leave to conclude my remarks on the last edition of the plays of Shakspere.

Vol. VIII. p. 177. The commentator tells us gravely, that *fear* is personified in this passage of Exodus, ‘I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.’ He might as well have said *will*, *put*, or any other word in the sentence, is personified. Such criticisms make one quite sick. Hypecacuanha is a jest to thoughts that shew an absence of common understanding.

P. 179. Stare at this note, ‘*at mount*] i. e. Mount *Misenum*! *At mount* is ready to mount our horses, as a child would see from the context.

P. 182. Warburton’s note marked ‘ is worthy of the author; as is that marked ‘ in p. 254. *Nomen ipsum stultitia.*

P. 295.

P. 295. The beautiful lines of Ben Jonson may be dedicated to Cloaca, along with his other works. Poor critic, to praise, as beautiful, poetry in which, tho consisting of only five lines, there are two false images, and three false metaphors! A fit commentator on Shakspeare!!!

P. 376. *His friends like physicians thrive*, only means his friends *act* like physicians, and give him over. *Thrive* is commonly used in this acceptation in the north.

How the stupid play of *Titus Andronicus* comes always to appear among Shakspeare's, I cannot imagine. Dr. Percy, a superlative judge of these matters, tells us, that it is not his, but only corrected by him. Even the annotators of this edition, in their notes at the end of the play, shew by many arguments that it is not Shakspeare's. Why not then, in the name of God, throw it into the fire? Will no editor shew taste enough to deliver us from nonsense that would disgrace a bedlamite to write or to read?

Vol. IX. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, p. 9.
Varlet is another name for page: *gros varlets*,
 a term for inferior servants. ‘ Il y eut huit
 ‘ mille cheveliers, et escuyers, et gens de traits,
 ‘ et *gros varlets* sans nombre.’ Juvenal des Ur-
 sins, Hist. de Charles VI. l’an 1286.

P. 10. note 9. Doth not *artless* refer to *art*
 and *artful*, as much as *skilless* to *skill* and *skill-*
full? Is not *skilless* a word unpronounceable,
 and not in use? Obe *lepidum caput*!

P. 19. “ Then she’s a merry Greek indeed.”
 ‘ Then, as we see wine give occasion of mirth
 ‘ by his excellent spirit, wherewith our spirit
 ‘ is delighted, and greatly encreased, if it be
 ‘ drunke with moderation: so such as are of
 ‘ merie dispositions enjoy a natural wine in
 ‘ their bodies, especially harts, and braines,
 ‘ which causeth them to laugh at the wagging
 ‘ of a feather; and, without just matter of
 ‘ laughter, without modest regard of circum-
 ‘ stance, to beare themselves light and ridicu-
 ‘ lous. And this, my friende, I take to be the
 ‘ cause of *merrie greeks*, who seek rather to
 ‘ discharge themselves of the jocond affection
 ‘ stirred

‘ stirred up by their humour, then require true
‘ outward occasion of solace and recreation.’

A Treatise of Melancholie. By T. Bright, Doctor of Physicke. London, printed by Vautrolier, 1586. p. 99.

I AM apt to think, that Shakspeare had read this book with much care. I know not if he derived his idea of the spleen being the cause of laughter, which he often uses in his works, from any other source.

P. 22. *Cre.* Will he give you the *nod*?

Pand. You shall see.

Cre. If he do the rich shall have more.

This alludes to the common phrase of calling a blockhead a *noddy*. Cressida's reply means, if he gives you *nod*, who are already a *noddy*, it is like giving more to the rich. Such is the pun meant by Shakspeare; heaven knows poor enough.

P. 45. The character of *blockish* Ajax is drawn from every pamphlet, every old woman, every schoolboy.

P. 72.

P. 72. *Fitt* not only signified *part* of a song, &c. as Dr. Percy hath shewn; but even part of a discourse, or other work in prose. In *The Examination of John Philpot*, formerly quoted, fig. B. 5. at the end of his third examination, we find *Thus far the thyrde fytte*.

P. 111. 'Wear this sleeve.' No antiquary hath explained if it was the complete sleeve of a lady's gown that her knight used to wear in combat, or tournament. I suppose it was only what is called the *cuff*.' The custom is evident from a thousand romances. In the Spanish, such sleeve is called *la manga*. It was commonly richly embroidered by the lady with her own cypher, and other devices.

P. 290. *Paid* is *beat*, not *punished*. The phrase is common in the north in this acceptance.

KING LEAR, p. 362. *Old course* is *the course of an old man*.

P. 409. 'My worthy arch and patron' is a Latinism, in which the component members of a word are separated, for 'my worthy and

‘ arch-patron.’ Horace has such separations. Or *arch* may here mean *support*, as arches support an edifice ; as it evidently does in the passage quoted from Heywood.

P. 413. ‘ An one-trunk-inheriting slave,’ every body sees is a poor fellow who inherits one trunk only from his father ; or who only *possesses* one trunk ; for so Shakspeare sometimes uses *inherit*.

P. 438. ‘ Do you but mark how this be-
‘ comes the house?’ I do not wonder this nonsense hath puzzled all the commentators ; not excepting the nonsense-reading-and-expounding Steevens. Shakspeare wrote ‘ Do you but mark
‘ how this becomes the *nonse*,’ i. e. the *nonce*, the *occasion* ; a word frequent to our ancient poets, but unknown to some ignorant corrector of the press, on the first printing of Lear ; who accordingly, like other of Shakspeare’s emendators, altered it to such nonsense as he at least could understand.

P. 439. ‘ Age is unnecessary.’ The commentators on this fine stroke are much to be
pitied.

pitied. To every mind of sensibility its meaning starts at once, and fills the eye with tears, its best illustrators! 'Age is unnecessary;' why should I be old? would Lear say. Your cruelty (he is speaking to his daughters) your cruelty, and my miseries, shew that age is now without respect, and without happiness. 'Age is unnecessary:' O death, why didst not thou prevent this unnecessary evil!

P. 455. ' 'Tis foul.' This every boy knows applies to the storm.

P. 518. 'Leap upright.' How the duce should this require explanation, except from such commentators as Warburton, whose muddy brains could dirty the clearest speech? Edgar says he is so near the precipice, that, for all beneath the moon, he would not leap upright, for even in doing so, the slight bend which his body would make would throw him over; or the fallacious brink crumble beneath his feet.

Vol. X. ROMEO AND JULIET, p. 13.
Shakspeare never uses the law term of *the same* in any, even the 'prose parts' of his plays.

Theobald's correction is doubtless right: *sunne* and *same* would be quite similar in old writing. The lines in this edition are pitiful; in Theobald's exquisite:

Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun.

P. 26. The earthquake is a mere stroke of fancy; and it is worthy of a right antiquary to find it in history, and in England in 1580!

P. 55. The ridicule of Shakspeare which may occur in low writers, it is superlative ridicule in an annotator to place in new light, after it was lost in the darkness of dulness.

P. 83. The *gossamer* is the web of young spiders who mean to rise in the air to catch flies, and spin a number ere they produce one in whose strength they can confide.

P. 122. The reading of *life* for *wife* is contradicted by the next line in the text, where Juliet answers, 'That may be, Sir, when I may be a *wife*.' It is seriously recommended to future *commentators*, (derived from *commentum*) on Shakspeare, that they read two lines before they pretend to explain one.

P. 126.

P. 126. In the name of Scriblerus, good Mr. Steevens, pray give us your notes on Virgil! Publish an edition *cum notis variorum*, i. e. *stultorum*. Among them will shine your remark on *Venus* and *Dea*. Some boy of taste will however laugh at your *erudition*, and tell you that *Dea* is one of the best strokes in Virgil, as it attends the exertion of godlike power.

P. 142. Read ‘flattering *ruth* of sleep,’ not *truth*. ‘If I may trust the flattering pity of
‘sleep.’

Ib. *Bosom’s lord* every boarding-school miss knows means *soul, mind*.

P. 147. *Nice* occurs often in Chaucer, and, in the Tale of Beryn, for foolish. It is from the French, being used very often in the *Roman de la Rose*, in the glossary to which, *Amsterd.* 1735, 3 vols. 12mo, is this explanation, *nice, sot, sans experience*.

P. 158. Balthasar was not asleep; but Mr. Steevens was, else he would have remembered, that, p. 150. Balthasar declares he doubts his master’s intention, and will hide himself, doubt-

less to watch him. The dream is a mere fiction of a cunning servant, who was afraid of being punished, if he confest his seeing the fray, as he did, without interfering to prevent bloodshed.

HAMLET, p. 174. Polack is from the French; but the annotator seems not to know that *polaque* in French is the same with *polacre*, a coasting vessel. It is in old French that *Polaque* is equivalent to *Polonois*, a Polander. Montaigne, in his Travels, Paris 1775, speaking of the Pope, ‘Outre cela il a basti des
‘ collieges pour les Grecs, pour les Anglois,
‘ Escossois, François, pour les Allemands, et
‘ pour les *Polacs*.’ The editor’s note on the last word is, ‘Les Polonois. On escrit *Polaques*;
‘ et ce nom vient de la Polaquie qui est le Pa-
‘ latinat de Bielsko.’ Montaigne wrote about Shakspeare’s time; tho his Travels, which are indeed not worth publishing, were never printed till 1775.

P. 179. The superstition of ghosts vanishing at crowing of the cock, is very ancient, as we learn from the Life of Apollonius Tyanæus, by Philostratus, Book IV. ch. 5. where the apparition of Achilles is said to vanish in lightning, ‘for now the crowing of cocks was heard.’

P. 185.

P. 185. ‘A little more than kin, and less than kind.’ This answer of Hamlet to the king’s expression, ‘My cousin, Hamlet, and my son,’ puzzles all the commentators, who seem none of them to have known that Shakspeare was a bit of a punster. ‘Son and cousin’ would Hamlet say is more than kin, and yet am I *less than kind*; i. e. have no kindness for him to whom I stand in these connections. Some explain it *more than kin*, nearer than common kindred; *and less than kind*, less than friends; or *no friend*, as *kyth*, or *kind*, signifies in old English and in Scottish. *Kyth and kin*, in the latter language, I observe to imply *friends and relations*. A gentleman of Scotland, when we were conversing upon this passage, gave me the following instance of the meaning of *kyth* and *kin*. When Oliver was Protector, the judges of the court of session, appointed by him, formed such wise regulations and decrees, in that court, that not one of them could be rescinded, tho their successors in Charles’s reign wished to shew them all possible contempt. Sir Hew Dalrymple of North Berwick, President of Session in Queen Ann’s time, upon this being remarked in conversation, said angrily,

It is no wonder: these folks had neither kyth nor kin. Implying that the justice of their judgments was neither biased by the influence of personal friends, nor of relations. The highest praise! tho meant as a satire on their want of connections and of birth.

P. 275. 'To die?—To sleep,—No more?' I do not approve of the point of interrogation, The meaning requires rather a point of strong assertion, if there was such a one in typography; 'To die is no more than to sleep: they are synonymous terms, and the one implies *no more* than the other.'

P. 292. 'Country matters.' The commentator is so chaste, that he seems not to know that both of these words are dissyllables. Tho I should be sorry to claim the praise of Agnolo Poliziano, of finding obscenities where the meaning was possibly innocent, yet such *matters* should either not be understood, or understood aright.

THE word *unhouseld* in this play may be illustrated from this passage of *Chaloner's Translation of The Praise of Folie*, London, 1549. fig. C. pag. versa. 'Likewise in *howsell*, and receiying of the sacrament,' &c.

OTHELLO,

OTHELLO, p. 434. Warburton's note is in his usual style; the arrogance of madness mingled with the ignorance of folly,

I SHALL conclude with a few remarks, which escaped me in their proper places.

Joan keles the pot, in a song in one of Shakspeare's plays: *keles* is still used in Yorkshire for *cools*: *to kele the pot* is to lift up the soup with the laddle, and let it fall, in order to cool it.

Heres in the Merry Wives of Windsor. The word occurs by some singular chance in Fables de la Fontaine.

Cancres, *heres*, et pauvres diables

Liv. I. Fab. 5.

where it implies *rogues*. And again in his Tales,

Un villageois, un *haire*, un miserable.

Le Faucon.

Sir Hugh in the same play. Knighthood was originally an ecclesiastic order. *Sir* to a *priest* is more ancient than *Sir* to a *knight*. See St. Palaye.

I FORGET where this fine passage is:

~~The poet~~, the lunatic, and the lover,

Are of imagination all compact, &c.

Compact

Compact in it means composed; as tho he had said 'all composed of, consisting of 'imaginations;' as he elsewhere says 'composed of pity.' 'Gravitie proceedeth of wisdom; and consisteth not in countenance, but is *compacte* of two vertues, constance and prudence.' *Elyot's Image of Governauce, anno 1549. fol. 25.*

TEMPEST. No commentator can get any notice of Prospero, duke of Milan. I find in my tablets this passage of Chiabrera in his Canzoni:

———— Come dell'or l'etate

Prospero addussi a Milanese.

Now I have not the book at hand; and it escapes me whether *Prospero* is a name, and noun to *addussi*; or an adjective to *l'etate*, by a typographic error for *prospera*; for *l'etate* is feminine. I find no mention of Prospero in Corio's very prolix History of Milan, so falsely commended by Du Bos, for it is as dull a work as ever I read.

Marmoset in The Tempest. The word occurs in *The Praise of Folie*, sig. 3. speaking of self-love in men: 'as whan one fowler than any 'marmoset thinks hymselfe to be goodlier than 'Abiolon.'

‘ Aroynt thee witch.’ *Macbeth*. The word aroynt is the same with the Scottish *tranoynt*, *depart*. In the *Life of Sir William Wallace*, by Blind Harry, a very curious monument of ancient Scottish poetry, are these examples :

Wallace tranoyntit upon the secynd day.

B. 8.

(The army)

Tranoyntit north upon ane gudely wyse.

Ib.

THE old Scottish poetry, which differs little from the old English, both being equally allied to the Saxon, would, I believe, if duly examined, furnish many illustrations of Shakspeare.

LET us not dismiss the book without due thanks to Mr. Steevens; to whom the readers of Shakspeare are as much obliged as those of Hudibras to Dr. Grey. Both of them are completely versed in

All such reading as was never read:

Both are fellow labourers in the congenial mines of dulness; where no man of taste or science ever dirtied himself. Both have explained their author, without being capable of understanding him.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

LUXURY and Literature, I confess, commonly go hand in hand. In proportion as the mind becomes refined, the manners become so likewise. The contrary is also true; for in proportion as the manners become luxurious, the mind grows refined; as liquors after fermentation run off pure. This was known to Marivaux, a great master in the science of mental luxury; he tells us, I think in his Marianne, *que l'esprit s'épure à proportion qu'il se gâte.*

LUXURY, my friend, is an invidious name, but is in itself the perfection of human nature, I mean not however the luxury of a beast, but that of a man. Temperance is the highest luxury under heaven, in every sense of the word. If luxury consists in the free use of the most exquisite pleasures, temperance is luxury; luxury in the extreme; luxury without satiety. But this luxury is only known to the wise and
the

the good. The learned are not always wise and good. The luxury of a learned age is very frequently that luxury which confounds every sense by saturating all; luxury in the penal acceptation of the word.

THIS luxury is merely comparative. The luxury of ancient times is barbaric penury to the present. I speak of the ancient times of our own country. Britain will probably never arrive at the luxury of ancient Greece or Rome.

THE common idea that luxury is a sure mark of a declining state is puerile; and worthy to be embraced by those only who, as Lord Bacon somewhere says, are not learned beyond certain common places. Luxury is commonly a token of the progress and vital health of a state; in so much that when luxury declines, the state declines; as the decline of spirits in the human body accompanies the decline of health. Few states ever achieved any thing great till they were luxurious.

WHAT a paradox! you will say. Was ancient Greece luxurious, when the fields of Marathon were dyed with the blood of the Persians? YES,

Yes it was. Ancient Greece was luxurious in the extreme, when the fields of Marathon were dyed with the blood of the Persians. Read Athenæus, and you will learn that, at that period, the very mob of Athens walked the streets in robes of silk, and with grasshoppers of gold glittering in their hair. Their generals and officers were abandoned to a sensuality that disgraces the name of man; and wallowed in all the beastliness of vulgar luxury and riot.

THE learned men of Greece, those perpetual wonders of the world, as they transcended humanity in some things, fell below it in others. Pindar, Eschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and others, we know for certainty, were given up entirely to a vice too black to mention. Socrates himself had different catamites beside Alcibiades; tho his passion for the last was the most notorious. They who look upon their infamous loves as Platonic, only shew their total ignorance of Grecian learning, and of Grecian manners. Athenæus, whose curious work every man should read with diligent attention, who wishes to form a personal acquaintance, if I may so speak, with the illustrious

trious men of Greece, is a sure voucher of these facts, for he gives the words of cotemporary witnesses, his work being indeed only a compilation. Grecian manners, as shewn in the writings of their authors, did not regard this vice as of the slightest moment. Sophocles and Euripides practised it we know in the open fields around Athens, as we learn from their own epigrams preserved by Athenæus. Anacreon's odes shew that the passion was looked upon as equally innocent with legitimate love. Tho perhaps you may reject this last testimony ; for, of late, some wiseacres have discovered that Anacreon's odes are not genuine, because, forsooth, they are in a different style from the fragments of some cotemporary of his, I forget whom. If you have not heard of this *discovery*, I know you will laugh ; but it is serious. Oh ! Oh ! Well said Dan Chaucer,

The gretest clerkes bene not the wisest men.

What should we say to him who told us that Waller could not be cotemporary with Milton, because their style is quite dissimilar ; so dissimilar, that ten centuries must have elapsed between them ? Did you ever hear of one Pere Hardouin,

Hardouin, a madman of learning (a common character), who tells us that Homer, Virgil, and Horace, were forged by monks in the twelfth century? This discovery he made from their style! In fact, no ancient can be known from his style; for he is a poor writer who cannot command a hundred different styles.

To return. Such was Greece in the day of her glory. Need I produce other instances to evince that luxury in its vulgar acceptation is the parent of great achievements?

THE reason may haply be this: contempt of life must produce any of these actions, in which life is evidently set down by its possessor as a mere trifle. Now this contempt is more certainly produced by luxury, than by the ferocious spirit of barbarism. How! you will say; doth not luxury enervate a man, and make him a coward? The very contrary: it makes him brave.

To explain this paradox: only consider what a *tædium vitæ*, an *ennui*, luxury breeds; and you will not wonder that no man despises life so much as the disciple of luxury, who hath
drunk

drunk of life till he is sick. Men of temperance alone enjoy life, and feel its delight: men of luxury are the most likely to be those

Who smile on death, and glory in the grave.

PERSONAL courage indeed depends totally upon the animal spirits. As the spirits are in perpetual fluctuation, we need not wonder at a brave man on one occasion being a coward on another. Yet luxurious living, which ferments and exalts the spirits, is certainly more likely to produce courage than the parsimony of temperance. Falstaff, you know, tells us, that warm blood begets warm thoughts.

THESE warm thoughts, my dear friend, will sometimes do wonders in literature, as well as in war: and there are poets whose pages have much of the true flavour of Burgundy. But corporeal luxury may beget works that flash for a moment: temperance, the mother of mental luxury, is the supreme parent of great and wise productions.

Y

I HAVE

I HAVE said that Britain can never rival the luxury of ancient Greece or Rome. The climate forbids it. A country where the means of luxury are natives of the soil, will certainly be more luxurious, when a just and equal government permits the enjoyment of her own blessings, than a country in which these means are the produce of commerce.

It follows not however that Britain must yield to Greece in science, tho science is never widely diffused till luxury is so likewise; tho luxury is never carried to a height till science refines it. The reason is evident. Science relates to the mind, but luxury to the body. The mind acquires ideas of every luxury of every climate, tho its grosser companion cannot enjoy them.

It is indeed absurd to lay down general rules upon any subject. Luxury may attain its height after the decline of a state, as well as during its greatest elevation. Perhaps we are now more luxurious than during the AGE OF GEORGE THE SECOND; the period of the widest extension and fame of our empire.

THO

Tho literature hath, in the most celebrated countries, attended with equal steps the progress of luxury; yet there are climates in which they have not appeared together. Nature loves to vary all her operations: the little folly of man only would confine her. His modes of acting are few. Those of nature infinite. He delights in systems. Nature knows no systems.

L E T T E R XL.

LORD BACON, in his admirable work, *On the Advancement of Learning*, published 1605, hath, with his usual amplitude of mind, pointed out in what parts human science was at that time deficient. From his hints many deficiencies have been supplied since that period by writers of the first merit: others still remain in the state they were in that age. It will, I flatter myself, be an enquiry of infinite curiosity and importance to shew wherein knowlege, partly from that great man's ideas, partly from chance, and the natural advancement of the arts, hath been enriched since the publication of Lord Bacon's treatise; and wherein it may still be pronounced to be deficient; and in order to this, it will be first necessary to review Lord Bacon's plan.

He divides learning into three parts, correspondent to the three grand attributes of the mind: History to the memory, Poesy to the imagination, and Philosophy to the judgment.

HISTORY

HISTORY he divides into Natural, Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Literary. The three first he allows as extant, the last as deficient.

He however afterwards subdivides **NATURAL** History into three sorts; that of Nature in course: that of Nature erring, or varying: and that of Nature altered, or wrought: that is, says he, History of Creatures; History of Marvails; and History of Arts. The first he notes as extant in perfection: the two latter are so weakly treated that he remarks them as deficient.

CIVIL History he divides into Memoirs: perfect Histories; and Antiquities; which last he denominates remnants of history that have escaped the shipwreck of time. In the first and last he can report no deficiency, as being imperfect in their very nature.

THE second species, or perfect History, he subdivides into History of a Time, or *Chronicle*: of a Person, or *Life*; what we now call Biography: and of an Action, or *Relation*. All of these classes he allows deficient in his own country.

ECCLESIASTICAL History, which is indeed that of human madness, need not be insisted on.

He then enumerates what he calls *appendices* to History: these are Apothemes, Orations, and Letters. His remark on the last I must beg leave to quote. ‘ Such Letters as are written
 ‘ for wise men are of all the words of men, in
 ‘ my judgment, the best; for they are more
 ‘ natural than orations, and public speeches;
 ‘ and more advised than conferences, or present
 ‘ speeches.’ In these he hath no deficiencies to propound.

In Poetry he can report no defect, it having no progress.

PHILOSOPHY he divides into Divine, Natural, and Human. Leaving the first to supernatural heads, we shall proceed to the second, which he says consists in Natural Science, and Natural Prudence. Natural Science he subdivides into Physic, and Metaphysic: the first the knowledge of matter, of all that has only being and motion; the last that of spirit, mind, abstract idea. In Physic he can find no defect; for many authors had written on it, tho with what truth he pretends not to determine.

META

METAPHYSIC relates to forms and qualities; as colours, vegetation, gravity, levity, tenuity, density, heat, cold, &c. and, secondly, to final causes; as, if the leaves of trees are meant to protect the fruit, &c. The first he brands as deficient; the latter he allows extant, but wishes it confined to its proper place.

HE adds to Natural Science that of Mathematics, in which he observes no deficiency.

NATURAL Prudence, or the practical part of Natural Philosophy, he divides into Experimental; Philosophic, or that arising from a knowledge of Physical causes; and Magical, which he seems so to denominate as, from profound discovery, being capable of operations, thought supernatural; as the prolongation of life beyond the natural term, &c. This he reports as defective.

IN treating of Natural Prudence he recommends An Inventory of the Estate of Man, containing all the inventions extant; from which will follow a just idea of what is not yet invented.

HE adds to Natural Philosophy a division of Doubts or Problems, general and particular: the first consisting of opinions of philosophers not yet fully established, or refuted; the last of problems like those of Aristotle; after, from experiments, &c. only doubt, and not clear truth, could arise. In this he recommends a Calendar of Popular Errors.

WE are now happily arrived at what he improperly calls HUMAN Knowledge, by which he means the KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES: a part of science of the highest use and dignity; and to which all the rest are but trifles. This he divides into two grand heads, the Knowledge of Man segregate, or considered as an individual; and Civil knowledge, or the science of society and government.

THE deficiencies noted in the first are Medicinal History, or Narrations of Cases: omissions in Anatomy: rash pronouncements by Physicians upon diseases: impropriety of receipts, &c. all mere trifles in comparison of what might be expected from such an Author.

Know-

KNOWLEDGE of the Mind he divides into two parts; that of the Nature, and that of the Faculties of the soul. The first he confesses beyond the sphere of human science. Divination and Fascination he adds to this as small appendices; foolishly enough, for there are, without doubt, no such things in being. They should have fallen under the head of Poetry.

THE knowledge of the Faculties of the Mind he likewise subdivides into two kinds; that of the Understanding, and that of the Passions; or Rational and Moral.

THE first contains the Four intellectual arts: that of enquiry, or invention; that of examination, or judgment; that of custody, or memory; and that of elocution, or tradition. Invention relates to arts; and to speech and arguments, or rhetoric and logic; over which the province of Judgment likewise extends. He considers Memory; then passes to Tradition, which is either by speech or writing: to it therefore belong Grammar and Rhetoric: he here treats of the methods of communicating knowledge, and recommends the Socratic plan
of

of leaving every thing in doubt ; this he calls *metbodus sincerus, sive ad filios scientiarum*. After some hints on Rhetoric, he passes to two appendices to the Tradition of science ; one of which he calls Critical, and the other Pedantic knowledge. The first he divides into five points. 1. Editing and correcting books. 2. Annotations explaining them. 3. Knowledge of the times in which the books were written. 4. Judgment on Authors, pointing out what books deserve reading, what not. 5. The disposition of studies, or in what order books ought to be read.

PEDANTIC knowledge, or that of a schoolmaster, admits four divisions. 1. Timing of knowledge. 2. Progress from easy authors to difficult. 3. Knowledge of the difference of talents. 4. Exercise : under which head he includes manners, and education in general.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY he considers at some length ; and with his usual strength and accuracy, except in some compliments to James I. to whom his work is addressed, and who was the most foolish and base prince who ever disgraced a throne.

SOCIAL

SOCIAL SCIENCE he next considers, with great wisdom, under the heads of Conversation, and of Business. His thoughts on this most important head are happily given in no very contracted bounds; and are almost worth the whole large work of Charron. I look upon this as by far the most valuable part of his most valuable performance.

THE other head of CIVIL KNOWLEDGE, or that of Government and Laws, he treats with timid brevity; and it is no wonder when writing to a king, and to an idiot king.

DIVINE Learning, or Divinity, is the final part of his work; and on this he writes mere nonsense like Milton, and other great men, whose prejudices were too strong for all their talents; or who thought, *loquendum ut vulgus, sentiendum ut sapientes*,

SUCH is the Analysis and very foul of this great work. Let us now proceed to what was proposed in the beginning of this Letter; and endeavour to point out in what parts science hath been improved since its publication, and
in

in what parts it is yet deficient: an undertaking which, if executed in its due extent, would be worthy of some Bacon of this age, if such there can arise; and were of the very first importance to mankind of any literary labours whatever. This is meant as an apology for the slight attempt to be made in this Letter, which, it is hoped, you will receive with your usual indulgence of friendship: for even superficial hints on such a subject are of no small daring. Yet literary courage and spirit of discovery you have not seldom imputed to your friend. Rinaldo indeed, you told him lately, was his model, when you quoted

E volge intorno gli occhi, e quella strada
Sol gli piace tentar, ch'altri dispera.

Let him plead in excuse these equal lines in the very next stanza:

Ogni rischio al valor sempre è sicuro;
Tutte le vie son piane a gli animosi.

Courage! If he fails, write on his epistolary essay, *Magnis tamen excidit ausis.*

WITHOUT further preface, the first subdivision of Natural History, tho considered as extant by Lord Bacon, he means in Pliny, Gesner, and Aldro-

Aldrovandus, hath received such vast improvements, since his time, by the labours of Bufson, and other eminent Naturalists, that it evidently appears that he had been rash in marking it as not deficient. Botany, in particular, hath acquired a new and scientific form by the universal adoption of the Linnæan or sexual system.

THE second subdivision, on History of Wonders in nature, is yet wanting, tho in the Philosophic Transactions, and elsewhere, are funds, properly evidenced, for at least a first volume of such a work; than which nothing could well be more interesting, even to the idle and the ignorant.

IN the history of Arts, France hath done so much as almost to move me to assume Lord Bacon's authority, and put it down as no longer defective. The history of most arts may now be found either in the Encyclopedie; or published separately by men of skill.

IN Civil History the article of Memoirs was defective in England in Lord Bacon's time.
France

France indeed had Joinville, Froissart, Commines: Italy Guicciardini. There are no ancient Memoirs of classic times, save those of Xenophon and Cæsar. But the article was deficient, and is still in this country. The Scottish authors in this way are pretty numerous: Melville hath vast merit in every view; Burnet's Memoirs, or, as he calls them, History of his Own Time, may be pronounced the very best work on our history yet extant. His talents and honesty are so great, that I agree with Henry Fielding that he is the chief of our historical writers, tho he be sometimes too credulous; as, for instance, in relating the death of James the Second's son, whom he thought supposititious. The laughers who are wits to fools, and fools to men of wit, were against him: Pope and Bolingbroke, ^{and Swift} and the whole of that detestable Jacobite set, united their strongest efforts to depress the work with too much success: and some pitiful curs of our own time have joined in the cry. But if Burnet's Memoirs are not very soon universally read and admired, this country will speedily become a province of France. Dr. Johnson hath justly praised his fine style; that of his

History

History is excellent, and hath all the strength and clearness of Hume, without his barbarisms. You will observe that I do not look upon the work of Thuanus as Memoirs, but as universal history: it is not in the style of Memoirs, as Burnet's History is. Chronological abridgements of History are highly valuable; but must be written with quite different talents from those of Henault, whose work is without taste and without knowlege. It has sold however—because he was a President.

ANTIQUITIES, in Lord Bacon's acceptation, relate, as he expresses it, solely to fragments that have escaped the shipwreck of time. Such are the parts of Diodorus Siculus and of Polybius that have reached us. Antiquities, in our modern phraseology, imply all that is properly the province of an Antiquary; the science of ancient customs, manners, buildings, dresses, coins, &c. &c. &c. This science, when applied to man and manners, is very amusing and entertaining; and as it has escaped Lord Bacon, allow me to put it down as an appendix to civil history; and only deficient in Lord Bacon's sense, when speaking of what he calls Antiquities, that is as imperfect in its very nature, and always admitting of further discovery.

THE

THE science of Medals forms another appendix to civil History, and that of the first importance, as they afford the strongest collateral evidence of its truth that can be given. It is surprizing this elegant study is not more general, for it certainly stands very high in the class of scientific amusements. Nay the philosopher who writes, or peruses history, for that greatest of purposes, the knowlege of human manners, will learn more from medals than from the best histories.

ANOTHER appendix to civil history let me mark in Parochial and County History; and that of particular towns and villages, which like the former will always be defective. Many ingenious men have however laboured very much in it of late.

TRAVELS ought to have been noted as a small appendix to Memoirs, being indeed Memoirs of a person's life for the time he was upon his journey. The credulity and ignorance of ancient travellers are now fallen into deserved contempt; and men travel who carry philosophy and taste, and knowlege of human nature,

nature, along with them. Many excellent books of voyages and travels now grace the English tongue in particular. The travels of Brydone are even full of sublime description; and would have been the first book of the kind, had not the Publisher forced him to make two volumes of what he had written in one. Hence his letter on comets is as contemptible as his letter on Etna is admirable.

LORD BACON well marks Perfect History as deficient in his own country, in all its branches of what we call General history, Biography, and History of a particular event. He regrets in particular the want of a History of England, and another of Scotland. The first is yet wanting, for all histories yet written will mislead, and not instruct any friend to the liberties of his country; the Rhapsody of Mrs. Macaulay being no exception. The latter is not much better; for Robertson is only a biographer on a larger scale.

BRITISH Biography is a province susceptible of much improvement, tho we have, the Biographia Britannica; a work unhappily confined by its size to great libraries.

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WE

WE have no Event related on the plan of Salust, tho the French have, in the History of the Spanish Conspiracy at Venice, by the Abbé de St. Real.

MR. GIBBON hath perhaps given birth to a new kind of History, comprehending all Lord Bacon's divisions of perfect history; for The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire is the relation of a vast Event, extending to the form of a Chronicle, and comprizing Biography; as the life of a Roman emperor is in fact the History of the Roman world during his reign. His two first volumes are well written, tho not without small faults, such as his seeming utterly to forget that there was such a writer as Plutarch, and such a prince as Titus in the world: and the chapters on Christianity; which, not to say they are foreign to his work, are vastly too long. His four last volumes (I speak of the octavo edition) betray a jaded attention. He is evidently fatigued with his subject; and of consequence imagines the reader must be so: to relieve him he gravely tells stories of miracles, &c. thinking to amuse; but nonsense doth not amuse.

The

The style is rather incorrect likewise in these four volumes; which are evidently written for sale, as the first two are for fame; it is even sometimes puerile, as where he speaks of an emperor being distinguished no less by the *pre-eminence* of his rank, than by the *preeminence* of his fear of a barbaric invasion. In the next page, however, is to be found the most sublime metaphor I have observed in any historian. His Conclusion is pitiously unfortunate; and more worthy of an old woman, who had been frightened into hysterics by reading a sixpenny history of the sack of Rome by Alaric, than of a man of science. He seems even to forget that America teems with more barbarians (his bugbears) than all the rest of the world put together. Let him revise his History, and it will stand among the very first in the world. Above all things let him be less a Geographer, and more a Chronologer. Geography and Chronology have well been called the two eyes of History; but he has extinguished the latter, as hoping the other would shine more brightly.

SUCH are the faults that have occurred to me in that grand work; which, when completed in its utmost extent, will with all its blemishes be a noble accession to the treasures of English literature. Nothing but my high regard for the work and its author could have induced me to so particular a discussion; for none but works of the first order deserve to have their errors pointed out, for those of others will not mislead.

A MOST important accession hath lately been made to the province of History by the philosophic spirit, that is daily spreading to every corner of the world, and every branch of science. This hath induced latter historians to blend the interesting history of society and manners with the dry detail of true facts, and imaginary causes. This is an improvement which even the prophetic genius of Bacon could not foresee; and shews that Time is the greatest of philosophers.

A BOOK of Apothemes, and even an excellent collection of jests and strokes of wit, are yet wanting in our language; tho the latter
would,

would, if executed by a man of taste and selection, be as amusing as the former would be instructive. Plutarch hath collected the apothemes of the ancients; Cæsar had collected a book of jests: as Poggius hath done since in Latin, Dominichi in Italian, and Melchior de Santa Cruz in Spanish. The amusements of Julius Cæsar cannot be unworthy of a man of the first fame and talents: and it lies with the collector, and not with the subject, that our jest-books are confined to the stall.

In the Epistolary Style we have Howel, a writer of wonderful merit, and by no means so much esteemed as he ought to be; and Mr. Melmoth, who in his Letters of Sir Thomas Fitz-Osborne hath merit, and hath met with proportionable esteem, in spite of his Greek names, which make the work look like a romance of Queen Elizabeth's time. I need not speak of Lady M. W. Montague, whose Letters are, in my opinion, much superior to those of the Marchioness de Sevigné, tho both have the very first claim to public praise that any woman's work can have, that of not being written for public praise. The letters of our

professed authors, published with their other works, I need not mention, but shall barely observe that those of Mr. Gray leave the others far behind.

OF Poetry I shall say nothing, but that we still want in England a Comic Epic Poem, in the style of the *Morgante*, and the *Ricciardetto*.

THE improvements and advances, both of what Lord Bacon calls the Physical and Metaphysical parts of Natural Philosophy, have since his time been amazing, and mostly in consequence of the hints of this profound writer. Mr. Walpole, in his admirable Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors, calls Bacon the prophet of arts, which Newton was afterwards sent to reveal. Yet Bacon was not merely a *vox clamantis in deserto*, as a wag said a preacher to empty benches was; but actually made many experiments to ascertain his own philosophy; to one of which he fell a martyr. The system of Des Cartes hath risen and fallen since Bacon; that of Newton hath risen and keeps its ground. Galileo hath improved Astronomy; and others have almost perfected it,
till

till a new planet, concomitant of the earth, hath been within these very few years discovered. Why should I speak of the thermometer, the barometer, and a thousand such inventions; or of electricity and electric fire, a new power, and new element, if I may so call it, tho it is in fact the element of fire, before only known materially? Why should I mention all the minute inventions, arising from experimental philosophy, of which Lord Bacon is the father; and to be found in the Philosophic Transactions, and Memoirs of innumerable foreign academies? This you know is a letter not a treatise. I shall content myself with observing that Natural Science and Natural Prudence, tho separated by Lord Bacon, have been since wedded; and have produced a great number of very fine and healthy children.

THE Inventory of the Estate of Man, than which nothing could well be more curious and interesting, is yet wanting to the world; tho its plan doth not seem of extremely difficult execution.

BROWN hath happily executed a Calendar, or Catalogue, of Vulgar Errors, tho' in a most pedantic style of Latin English, and which hath, to the great credit of our taste, been revived in England, after being dead a whole century.

UNDER the article of Mathematics it might have been noted, that the invention of Logarithms, about Five years after the publication of Lord Bacon's book, hath greatly facilitated the solution of questions in this science. Navigation, Geometry, &c. have likewise received many improvements, both minute and important; tho' it would extend this Letter to too great a length to enumerate these improvements. I hasten therefore to the most important part of Lord Bacon's work, and of human science, which is

THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IMMEDIATELY RELATES TO MAN HIMSELF, CONSIDERED AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AND AS A MEMBER OF SOCIETY.

LET me make one prefatory observation on this greatest branch of human knowledge, which

which is, that it hath ever moved my highest wonder that, while Sir Isaac Newton, and other men of the largest genius and most severe faculties, have pointed the whole ardor of their minds to theories of worlds, of gravitation, colours, and other baubles, of no more consequence to man than a collection of butterflies; this, almost the only part of science that is of importance to human kind, should remain desert and uncultivated. Surely nothing can be a more humiliating instance of human folly than that men, and men of talents, should neglect the only province of wisdom that immediately interests mankind; and should seem to prefer a parcel of idle and airy speculations to the grandest part of human knowledge; that which tends to make man wiser, better, and happier; to improve society, and government; and institute a paradise upon earth.

To descend to the smaller divisions of this ONLY TRUE KNOWLEDGE, some of which however are trifling in respect of others:

THE deficiencies of Medicine need not be noted, as it is all one defect.

LOCKE'S

LOCKE'S Treatise upon Human Understanding is a most acute work, but tends not to increase the practical wisdom of man. The nature, progress, and exertion, of ideas are merely speculations, and have a great chance of falsity; for we confessedly know nothing of the nature of the mind, which is their producer. It is the proper application of ideas that man needs to be instructed in. What is it to me from what rarifications of earth the gold of this guinea is formed? The point is, how am I to use it with propriety so as to benefit myself and others?

THE whole divisions of Rational Knowledge are still deficient; and will be, till some men of vast talents apply to them, and not with a speculative, but with a practical bent of mind.

THE appendices of Rational Knowledge, being Critical and Pedantic science, have received great improvements, especially in England, since the publication of the work On the Advancement of Learning: yet deficiencies may still be noted. A general collection of critical observations would be of much utility, where
a sys-

a system were ridiculous. Elements of Criticism form a good title, but a woeful book: full of false Elements and false Criticism. Blair's Lectures on the Belles Lettres are no better; he being the mere ape of the French critics, and never venturing beyond his leading-strings. It is indeed the great fault of our critics that they so seldom think for themselves. The two Wartons are almost the only critics we have who have shewn a genuine taste.

PEDANTIC knowledge hath however made slower advances than criticism, tho it is of infinitely more consequence. When will man acquire wisdom enough to leave the pursuit of big trifles for that of small things that most import him?

THE system of education is still foolish. Rousseau hath pointed out some improvements, but a defect almost inseparable from great views is, that they are always wasted in speculation. Hence few of his remarks can be of any practical use.

ONE of the most glaring defects in the present state of Pedantic Science is, the great time wasted in acquiring dead languages, which, in nine cases out of ten, are of no use to the child, but in fact are quite neglected and forgotten by him in a few months after he hath left school. Perfection of folly ! To waste the most precious years of human life in acquiring useless languages, and languages that are to be forgotten ! *O cæcas hominum mentes !* Where a boy is intended for any of the learned professions, or is heir of an easy fortune, the study of languages is proper ; but in this order : one year for the English ; one year for the Greek ; one year for three other tongues, the Latin, Italian, and French : but, while studying these languages, they should be considered as amusements, and relaxations, as learning the French is now, while the ART OF BEING A MAN should be considered as the business of a boy's education. Domestic and Social Wisdom ; Virtue and Happiness ; all the honest arts of making life delightful, respectable, and important to society ; these ought to form the essence and great object of education. It is a trite observation, that girls arrive sooner at womanly manners

ners and knowlege, than boys do at the manners and knowlege proper for their sex. This is ascribed to Nature having assigned a previous maturity to females. The fact is, it is the consequence of the different modes of education. A girl is doing the honours of the table, and winning every body by her polished conversation, while a boy is blubbering over an useless book. His being a man all his life is of no consequence, provided he is a scholar for a few years!—Prejudice! Prejudice! When will the happy period arrive that humankind shall break thy detestable shackles, only strong from the weakness of the wearers! When will the awful voice of Nature sound to the human mind, Be free!

IN Moral Philosophy and Social Science, these greatest divisions of this grand part of knowlege, few or no advances have been made. The lesser morals have perhaps been improved by the Spectator, and other works of the kind, being universally read: and the importance even of the least points of morality is so great that I believe every man of a sound and benevolent mind will agree, that there is more real
glory

glory in having written two pages that have actually taught mankind how to be virtuous and happy, than in composing whole systems of speculation; more illustrious fame arising from one of Mr. Addison's papers in the Spectator, than from the whole works of Sir Isaac Newton, even tho' he had demonstrated an exact and stupendous theory of deity itself.

ON CIVIL KNOWLEDGE, or that of Government and Laws; hath certainly admitted no small improvements since Lord Bacon's age. Not only books of merit have been written upon these points; but, what is of far higher importance, the practical operation of Government and Laws hath in most kingdoms been rendered more beneficial. It is amazing indeed to consider how widely philosophy hath spread the light of liberty and happiness over great part of the world within a short period of time. The reduction of the papal power in many of the kingdoms where it was most predominant is, in particular, a grand epoch of the triumph of science over folly and fanaticism. What may we not hope when such is the beginning of the reign of Philosophy? A perpetual peace among all

all the powers of Europe; in which every useful and elegant art shall be carried to a perfection unknown even to the dreams of visionaries, might almost no longer be regarded as an idle imagination.

With regard to theoretical knowledge of Laws and Government, the work of Montesquieu deserves mention, tho its brief, and apparently deep and dictatorial style hath acquired it infinitely more fame than it deserves. The treatises of Millar and Ferguson on Civil Society have merit, tho by no means of the first kind: the last author in particular being the dryest whom I ever remember to have read; inasmuch that the most interesting subjects lose all interest in his frigid pages.

CAN I pass the subject of Government and Laws without expressing an ardent wish for a reform of those of our yet happy country; for tho her sun be set, as statesmen tell us, yet it is a very fine evening, and promises a future bright day. That a CODE OF ENGLISH LAW should never yet be thought of by the legislature, is one of the strangest instances of the melan-

1785

melancholy truth, that human affairs are governed by Chance, and not by Wisdom. But God forbid that it should be attempted during this tory reign, in which we behold judges carrying politics into the bench of impartial justice, as violently as in the reign of James II. in spite of the infamy of Jeffries which awaits them. Indeed, it may safely be said that the laws of this country are either a disgrace to the constitution, or the constitution to the laws; for it is a certain fact, however paradoxical it may seem, that they are often in direct opposition to each other. To instance in one point, it is a maxim in the law, as tories tell us, that the king can do no wrong. By the constitution of this country, according to two precedents, the king can not only do wrong, but be put to death, as Charles I. or banished, as James II. according to the offence. But I forget that I am talking of our liberties, after they are ACTUALLY LOST from this very cause of the laws being destructive of the constitution: for cases of libel, or of treason, are the most delicate and chief objects between prince and subject; and, thanks to our Jacobite judges, *an information* is lodged *ex officio* by the Attorney General, a *Special Jury* is packed

packed by the judge, and must obey his commands; if they fail in any point, they are browbeaten, and taught to know better; and thus every subject who steps forth to defend the rights of his brethren, is the slave of the slave of the king. Thus it is in the power of any prince, who shall even want common faculties, to overturn our constitution, and enslave us by our own laws. Montesquieu hath observed, that no state can be free in which the laws of treason are not most accurately defined in every point, because upon them the very existence of liberty depends. Now in our *happy and glorious* constitution, the laws of treason are quite inaccurate. Indeed, whoever will examine our constitution and laws together, will pronounce both to be very imperfect; and if we are not slaves the cause is in our breasts, and hands; not in our constitution, nor our laws. Before our constitution can be called perfect, the king must by law resign one half of his present power and patronage; which he may do without the slightest danger of an Aristocracy rising on his ruins. That this was not done on the accession of William III. or of George I. to the throne is an eternal disgrace.

to the judgment of our National Councils. In the later event especially, if the very title of King was given, nothing was too great to ask, or rather to keep.

SUPPOSING the laws rendered perfect, who can afford to pay for them? Sweet laws that cannot be administered without ruining the oppressed! It is to be hoped that in the course of a *century* or *two*, we shall have wisdom enough to reduce the fees of courts and lawyers to one tenth of what they are now. And when reformation once begins, it precipitates; so that, whenever that event takes place, we may venture to prophesy, that in the course of a year thereafter these fees will be reduced to one-thirtieth part of the present, which would yet be too high.

1785 LET me add that *Police*, in particular, a word unknown to the English language, and to the English laws, is woefully deficient in this enormous metropolis. Why is not the price of meat, for instance, regulated as that of bread? Our wise senators are so much occupied with game-laws, that they cannot bestow the
most

most trifling attention on the lives and properties of their constituents ; when, God knows, it matters not the tossing up of a straw if there were not a bird of game in the three kingdoms, or beast of game, except the hunters. The Criminal Laws of Britain are much too murderous ; and seem utterly to forget that there are punishments more dreadful than death even to the meanest mind.

SUCH are my hasty thoughts on this grand subject of the Progress of Knowledge. Sensible of their defects, I even submit them with anxiety to the judgment of your affectionate friendship.

P. S. You will perhaps think a former assertion of this Letter extravagant ; namely, that the study of Burnet's History is connected with the welfare of our state. But it only means that the true and old Whig principles are essential to that welfare ; and that if these prevail, Burnet will be read with admiration. As for the new Whig principles, they have done as much harm to the constitution as toryism. - An old whig wishes a reduction of prerogative : a new whig wishes to extend it, if it will serve his faction.

L E T T E R XLI.

YOU rightly observe that the fewness of original writers is greatly owing to the unjust esteem in which Imitation is held. Imitation is in fact only a decent and allowed plagiarism. When it appears in a certain degree, it is pronounced literary theft, and justly held infamous: in other degrees, and in certain forms and dresses, it is called honourable: but in fact it only differs in the degree of disrepute.

IMITATION I define, such evident copying from a former author, in whatever language, as evinces that the imitator meant to appropriate the merit of the thoughts, language, or other perfections, of his model to himself. If such imitation can have any claim to praise, it must arise from the originality of the copy, if I may use an expression that sounds a little Bœotian. When the copy is inferior to the original, neglect is certainly its proper reward: if superior, it merits no praise, for *facile est inventis addere*, it is an easy matter to improve on the inventions of others.

OUR

OUR idea of Imitation must not however be extended too far; else we shall pronounce every author, who writes a poem in Twenty-Four Books, an imitator of Homer. It is only imitation of general design in its distinct divisions of episodes, &c. imitation of incidents, of characters, of sentiments, images, style, manner, that is properly Imitation. For instance,

MILTON writes an epic poem as Homer hath done; for I call Milton's Paradise Lost an epic poem in every sense of the word: critics, who scruple this appellation, seem to forget that *epic* only means *narrative*; and may, with great justice, be applied to a Tale of Fontaine, tho' generally ascribed to narrative poems of the highest order, by way of excellence. I say Milton writes an epic poem as Homer hath done; but wherein doth he imitate Homer? In not one point. The general plan of his poem, his incidents, &c. are totally different from those of Homer, or any other writer. Milton is therefore an original poet.

VIRGIL writes an epic poem likewise as
Homer hath done: wherein doth he imitate
A a 3 Homer?

Homer? In every thing. He hath nothing of his own: all is stolen; stolen without acknowledgement. It follows, that he is an infamous plagiarist.

YET the world hath not dared so to arraign him. The enormity of his crime precluded due punishment. You know what the pirate said to some great conqueror, that the victor, because he slaughtered whole nations, and plundered whole empires, was called a hero; whereas he, who only killed a few persons, and rifled a paltry treasure, was called a thief. So it hath fared with Virgil.

MR. GIBBON somewhere expresses a surprize that no Greek writer whatever, tho many are posterior to Virgil, ever thought him worth mention. The cause is evident. The Greeks looked upon him as a paltry translator; and, what is worst of all, an epitomizing translator, of their own immortal poet. Had a Greek mentioned him, it must have been with utter scorn, as we would mention any writer who should publish in French the *Paradise Lost*, and the *Paradise Regained*, frittered down into
a fop-

a foppish production in fix books ; and desire the world to look upon it as an epic poem.

I HAVE said that an imitation may be original ; and that in this point only the very minute merit of imitation consists. Mr. Pope's Imitations of Horace are original and happy. Boileau's poor copies, which he hath had the impudence to call Satires, are constrained and feeble : he has gone behind the ancients like a menial ; not like a king, with his attendants before him.

ALL kinds of imitation, and all imitations whatever, sink into that class of poetry which we read to ladies at a tea-table ; and then give to the servant, that he may not burn his hands in carrying off the tea-urn. No man of real genius can be an imitator, supposing that he made the attempt : originality is coessential with genius, as Milton tells us that light is coeternal with the deity.

YET with us there is likewise a god of theft, as Lucian phrases it * ; and we seem to venerate

* Καὶ γὰρ κλεπτικὸς ὁ Θεός.

Lucian. in eum qui dixit, Prometheus es in verbis.

imitations as much as originals ; goods got by theft, as much as those honestly acquired : nay we bestow upon the thief of sublime inventions the deification only due to the first inventor.

WE all know that painters of little or no merit have yet made such perfect copies of the works of the greatest masters, that even, in some cases, these masters themselves could not distinguish them from their own productions. Yet the copiers acquired no reputation from those imitations. Why should it be otherwise in poetry ? Imitations of the very verbage and manner of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, we see daily performed by writers of slender talents ; and such imitations I will venture to pronounce the easiest of literary labours, and in no respect more entitled to praise than copies of paintings.

SPEAKING of imitation in painting, I cannot help adding a remark on the complete folly of instituting *Academies of Painting*, or any other art, or science ; that is, *Schools of Imitation*. Did ever any one good painter arise from an academy ? Never ; not even one of the slightest reputation. The moment the French academy

academy was instituted, painting ceased in that country. No more Claudes or Poussins arose. It was reserved for the ideotic counsels of this Gothic reign to crush all hopes of the progress of painting at once, by founding an academy. In our academy, as in others, all imitate, none invent; the art is of course at a stand, soon to fall, if other means do not foster it.

I know of no service which our Royal Academy doth, but to spoil many good taylor, by converting them into *artists*, as they call themselves. It is to be hoped some future prince will just have sense enough to dissolve this lump of regal folly; and to say to art and science, “Be free.” We already see its effects in the odd productions of its members. In the hall of the Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, John Street, Adelphi, is now exposed to public view such a series of daubings by a Royal Academician, nay Professor of Painting to the Royal Academy, as would, both for design and execution, have disgraced Lapland in the Twelfth century. Had they appeared on sign posts, they would only have arraigned the taste of the innholders; but
as

as the painter is so impudent as to hold them out as a *national* work, the most public contempt and censure is due to them. What must foreigners think of us, upon reading the puffs, and seeing the productions? Posterity! Posterity! indeed we are not quite so barbarous as thou wilt take us to be, should these *Academical Exercises* reach thy notice! This artist, I am informed, hath written "A Treatise on Painting," in which he is always quoting many classics. God help us! A man must bring a classic sense to the classics, else their high ideas will confound, and not enlighten.

To young writers especially, Imitation cannot be held out in too just, in too contemptible, a light. They ought even to be told that there is more applause due to a bad original, than to the best of copies. By these means they will at least endeavour to be original; and this they cannot accomplish without trying to think for themselves, and to dig diamonds from the mines of invention by their own labour. A point of the utmost consequence to every kind of science; for, were the clouds, which Imitation and Prejudice raise in the mind, dispersed, knowledge of every

every denomination would diffuse its benignant light with redoubled rapidity.

To very young writers, I allow, Imitation is proper as a task; but it ought only to be regarded as such, and abandoned with other academical occupations. Even this can only be permitted from the consideration that many minds are like wildings, and will neither bear flowers nor fruit till they are grafted.

P O S T - S C R I P T.

SINCE my Letter On Improving the Language, it has occurred to me, from the hints of some very learned and ingenious men who much approve of the other ideas, that the final *th*, however soft to an English ear, cannot be pronounced by foreigners at all, and is therefore by no means laudable. The final *h* had better be always omitted, except in interjections, as Ah! Oh! and in the word *breath*, where it is very expressive. Substantives in *th* should take the *é*, omitting the *h*; as *truté*, *faité*, &c. in verbs, &c. both the *t* and *h* ought

com-

commonly to be cut off; or else altered according to the genius of the language. By giving plurals in *n*, and a few substitutions of *z*, perhaps a sufficient number of the letter *s* will be thrown out, and the *present tense* of verbs may very well retain that letter. Certain it is that were we to give the *th*, and the still worse *eth*, (*begineth*, &c.) the language would only be rendered more barbarous and horrible, nothing being so feeble and uncouth as that termination *eth*. The *h* is extremely frequent in our tongue, and ought to be omitted whenever it can. Even the final *sh* had far better be altered.

I FORGOT to mention that the plural in *a* is perfectly Anglo-Saxon, and homogeneous to our language, there being two declensions in *a* out of the six declensions of substantives in the Anglo-Saxon Grammar drawn from Hickes. The instances are *pīn*, *ancilla*, *pīna*, *ancillæ*; and *rūnū*, *filius*, *rūna*, *filiī*. So that you see both male and female substantives admitted of it originally; and the neuter may certainly take it with at least equal propriety.

LETTER

L E T T E R XLII.

I GRANT you that Mr. Gray's censure of David Hume is the most exceptionable part of his Letters; but it is very vindicable, being written in confidence to a friend; and with no intention that the public should see it. His trite application of the remark, that muddy rivers seem deep, shews that it was written in an unlucky moment, when thought is absent; and perhaps in the flush of evening wine: which last is indeed the only apology that can be made for the remainder of the stricture. No writer can be more clear and manly than Hume; I mean as to his sense; nay, what is wonderful, his style is always easily intelligible, tho full of solecisms and every species of barbarity: his gaiety is always that of an innocent and truly wise man. His History of England, nay his Essays, display talents very far superior to any that Gray hath ever shewn. Mr. Hume might have ruled a state: Gray's utmost views would only have ruled a college.

Hume's

Hume's reputation in France was only the echo of his fame in England. Mr. Gray shewed himself less than a child when he called Hume one. Such mad calumnies recoil upon their author's judgment, and crush it to nothing. Yet all this censure lights upon the Editor; for Gray would have called upon mountains to cover his shame, if he had seen his name publicly branded with throwing dirt from Billingsgate upon a cotemporary lord of fame, because his envy saw that he was richer dressed, and of far higher rank than himself.

THE History of Mr. Hume is indeed very far from being laudable. It is a mere apology for prerogative from beginning to end: and, tho the best apology which hath been offered, is yet very weak; which shews the cause must be desperate when even so great an advocate utterly fails in its defence. At the same time that his political principles led him to exalt the prerogative, his philosophic opinions forced him to depress the church: while every body knows that *no church, no king*. Hence his work is one chaos of heterogeneous axioms, and misrepresented events. His opinions even com-
bated

bated his natural sensibility; for I remember that, in narrating some of the most flagitious acts of cruelty of the blessed reign of Charles I. or II. he displays due sense of the atrocity of such calm deeds of tyranny, as make the frenzies of Nero or Domitian mere jests: but when he hath got thro them, and his opinion begins to resume cooler operation, he gravely begins his next paragraph thus: "These acts of severity (if they can be called such)."

WHAT was the reason, do you think, that could induce a writer of such talents to prostitute them so basely? that could induce such a philosopher to suppose that millions of human beings were to hold their life and happiness at the nod of *one of them*: of a thing called a king; perhaps in corporeal and in mental powers less than the least of his subjects?

THIS is easily accounted for. Hume was poor, and wished to be rich. The king is the surest fountain of wealth: and to flatter him is the path to preferment, and to opulence. Hence public spirit is almost unknown in monarchies; for one man centers in himself the wealth and
praise

praise of his subject. Hume tells us in his
 Chap. LX. 1651. "Though the established
 "government was but the mere shadow of a
 "commonwealth, yet was it beguiled by
 "proper arts to encourage that public spirit,
 "which no other species of civil polity is ever
 "able fully to inspire." Hear him! Hear him!
 Then your History Mr. Hume wishes to ex-
 tinguish PUBLIC SPIRIT, that is, to destroy
 the most laudable principle of society.

I know not how it is that the whole late
 Scottish writers of any eminence have been on
 the tyrannic side; if we except Dr. Gairdner, a
 man of real abilities; but strangely misapplied
 in pulling down those of others. Yet presby-
 tery, the religion of that country, hath always
 been considered as necessarily connected with
 whig principles; and the common people of
 Scotland are almost universally whigs. The
 peers are however almost all tories owing to
 the feudal spirit of tyranny and luxury not
 being wholly extinguished in that kingdom till
 1747, when the estates jurisdictions were abo-
 lished. The court cannot judge of Scotland
 by the nobility; the fathers of whom having
 been

been tyrants to slaves, the sons are willing to be slaves to tyrants; for such is the spirit of the feudal system: a later emancipation from which hath thrown Scotland a whole century behind England in point of civil liberty. Now the writers, in general, naturally adapt their principles to those of their superiors, and the court, *unto whom they look for their reward.*

HENCE in our times Junius, Wilkes, Churchill, and other men of talents, have judged of that ancient and warlike kingdom very unjustly. A *Scot* is, with them, synonymous with a *tory*, a *slave*. Nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of the nation; however it may apply to the noble *scum* on the *top*, or the *dregs* of mercenary writers at the *bottom*. But the nation is full of generous liquor, and hath nothing to do either with its *scum*, or its *dregs*; which are always worst, when the liquor is best. Indeed Churchill's works have passed thro more editions, and are more read, in Scotland, than here; which shews that the love of that country for liberty is superior even to the most inveterate national prejudices.

By a necessary chain, Scottish Tories and Jacobites are now court favorites,

They taste the sweets of this Saturnian reign

Epistle to Sir Wm. Chambers.

while the real nation, and its real interests, are neglected and despised. It is certainly fortunate that Scotland hath not been free above forty years, as to that circumstance we are indebted for its happy quiet, at a time when every province of the British empire swarms, in commotion, or in rebellion, the odious and most deplorable, but natural and unavoidable effects of those tory principles of government which have prevailed thro this pitiful and miserable reign, and have made it one blot in the British Annals.

It is no less wonderful than true, that, ever since the name of Whig hath been known, the nation hath been indebted for all its glorious events to men of that description, and for its miseries to the Tories. Indeed, my friend, if any one will shew me that a tory ministry ever did the least good to this country, or even did not do it great injury, I shall turn tory instantly: but if, from the reign of James II. to this hour, tory ministers have, by every measure,

there, brought calamity and disgrace on their country, then must every Briton view such principles as the seeds of death in our constitution; and on those who profess them, and foster them in the chief magistrate, as deserving of the execration of every good man, and in fact of the highest punishment which the laws of society can ordain for those who meditate the utter perdition of the community.

A KING of Great Britain who knows that, by the present constitution, he is only elective chief magistrate of the country, and will comply with his station (it is a glorious one!), hath it in his power to appropriate to himself all the fame rising from the public spirit of the greatest of modern nations. But if he wishes to extend his prerogative, that is, to extinguish that public spirit, he is a *suicide*; and the jury of posterity will bring it in *venia*. For he is the enemy of his own power, not to say of his own existence: the power of an English king being directly opposite to his prerogative; for, his power is drawn only from the confidence of the nation, which his prerogative will infallibly destroy, if displayed, and not kept, as a

sword in the scabbard, never to be drawn by a
 brave man but upon most urgent occasion. If
 he makes himself little, he will be great indeed!
 but if he bites the curb, which our fathers have
 put in his mouth, it is of steel, and he will
 only spoil his teeth. If he wishes to be an ox,
 he will feel himself only the frog in the fable.
 You will know that I mean still less to
 defend the philosophic tenets of David Hume;
 tho he be a great and elegant writer of philo-
 sophy. But I detest the principles of any man
 who writes popularly against the religion of
 his country, let it be what it will, if it does
 not injure political freedom, the first of human
 blessings. I say popularly, because if treated in
 an high and abstract, or in a poetical style, as
 Lucretius hath done, it will not injure the
 vulgar faith, but only afford speculation to the
 learned. Religion is the only bond of society
 for the mob; and they ought not even to sus-
 pect that their superiors despise it; as they will,
 in that case, from their ignorance of moral
 theory, imagine that their superiors have no
 laws, and consequently that they ought to have
 none. Philosophy will never do for the vulgar.
 They

They must be bound in the chains of prejudice, and so led thro the road of life; and not trusted to themselves after proper information.

Besides, my friend, the consolations of human life are by no means too numerous. Religion is one of the chief of these consolations to thousands of people; and among these to many possess of qualities superior to genius, knowledge, or philosophy; qualities that constitute the good, the first order of society. Shall I, with rash and sacrilegious hand, burst open the temple of their happiness, and steal away the palladium of their peace? Forbid it Humanity! Forbid it even Philosophy! The philosophy that is not benevolent is false and destructive. It is impossible for man to know the truth: but it is of no importance whether his felicity be founded on truth, or on delusion.

LETTER XLIII.

I KNOW not how an opinion hath been propagated among several relaters of the life of Torquato Tasso, which hath no foundation in fact; it is that Tasso's madness originated from his presumptuous and disappointed love for Leonora da Este, sister of Duke Alfonso of Ferrara. The fact is, his madness arose from the various troubles of a dependant and perplexed life, operating with unceasing violence upon a melancholy temperament, and a morbid tenderness of feeling. But, before we trace it, let us discuss this same tale of Leonora. The materials for this discussion shall be drawn from the only authentic life of Tasso, that written by his friend Giovanni Battista Manso, lord of Bifaccio and Pianca. This long and curious narrative is so extremely rare, that it is no wonder latter biographers only speak of it from report. The edition used is that of Venice 1621, 12mo. 372 pages.

MANSO

MANSO tells that there were three ladies of the name of Leonora at Ferrara; all of whom are celebrated by his friend in different sonnets, &c. and that it is impossible to say which of them stood highest in his affections, or even if any of them was mistress of his heart. These were the princess Leonora above-mentioned; Leonora Countess of San Vitale; and Leonora one of the maids of honour to the princess. Manso seems to incline to think the latter was the lady really beloved by Tasso; which indeed is so probable, that one may safely pronounce it the truth.

THE beginning of Tasso's madness is dated by Manso about the thirty-second year of his age, two years after publishing the immortal *Gerusalemme*; when he was tyrannically confined by order of Duke Alfonso, on pretence that he wished no whim of Tasso should deprive his court of so great a character. The violent opposition to his great poem, and the contempt which the invidious tried to throw upon it, are put by his biographer as one great cause of his alienation of mind. The increase of it he marks as owing to these causes: 1. The

falsehood of a friend, who published what was confided to him as an inviolable secret, the *ameri* of Tasso. 2. The base suspicions raised against him by his enemies. 3. His several confinements. 4. The loss of the Duke his patron's favour. 5. Let me add, as the strongest cause of all, his being so heated at the bad reception of the *Gerusalemme*, a reception in all ages given to works surpassing common expectation, as to re-write that Poem under the title of *La Gerusalemme Conquistata*; nay to compose many books of a third alteration to be like a medium between the two former. Such long compositions, written with heat and rancour, must certainly have impaired the most exuberant brain; and carried off the whole spirits of the mind till lees alone were left.

It may not be incurious to examine the nature of a shock that could lay so vast a soul in ruins. The enquiry will resemble that of the philosopher who visits a delicious country desolated by an earthquake. Calabria, the native realm of Tasso, now presents too lively an image of his situation in his latter days: All that is grand, all that is beautiful, mingled in horrible confusion!

The qualities of Tasso's disease are described by Manfio to have been these:

1. MELANCHOLY. This seems to have been inherited from his father. There is a pleasing melancholy; which is always the concomitant of genius, and which whoever hath not felt,

He need not woo the Muse: he is her scorn.

But Tasso's melancholy was a torment to him.

'I must always be an object of your compassion,' says he in a letter to Mauritio Cataneo, 'because the melancholy which torments me is infinite; and the worst I could say of it would exceed all belief, and yet would not be so bad as the truth.'

2. DELIRIUM owing to hypochondriac causes; which increased to

3. MADNESS; accompanied with a belief of his being

4. UNDER the influence of witchcraft; and

5. ATTENDED by an apparition.

Such are Manfio's divisions, which cannot be called very proper. On the two last he gives us some curious details, which may be worth taking

taking brief notice of. Tasso speaks thus of his enchantment, and supposed spiritual attendant, *falletta*, in a letter to Maurizio Cataneo: ' You must know that I was bewitched, and have never been cured; and perhaps have more need of an exorcist than of a physician; because my disease proceeds from magical art. I would likewise write a few words respecting my dæmon: the rascal hath lately robbed me of many crown pieces; I know not the amount, as I am by no means a miser in reckoning my money, but I dare say they amount to twenty. He hath likewise turned all my books topsy-turvy; opened my chests; robbed me of my keys, which I could not keep from him. I am at all times unhappy, but especially in the night. I know not whether my disease proceeds from frenzy, or not.' This was written when he was confined at St. Ann's; and, after his deliverance from confinement, he still writes thus to the same Cataneo. ' This day, the last of the year, the brother of the reverend signior Licino has brought me two of your letters; but one of them was taken from me, as soon as I had read it, and I believe the *falletta* must have carried it off, because

because it is that in which he is mentioned: and this is one of the miracles which I have seen often in the hospital.' (St. Ann's at Ferrara, where the duke sent him, and appointed skilful physicians to attend him.) These things I am certain are done by some magician; and I have many arguments of it; particularly of a loaf visibly stolen from me one afternoon, and a plate of fruit taken from before me the other day, when a Polish gentleman, (*gentil giovane Polacco*), came to see me, worthy indeed to be witness of such a wonder, &c.

Manso afterwards tells us that Tasso would frequently in company be quite abstracted in his frenzy; would talk to himself, and laugh profusely; and would fix his eyes keenly upon vacancy for a long time, and then say that he saw his familiar spirit; and describe him as under the semblance of an angelic youth, such as he paints him in his dialogue of *Le Messaggero*. Manso particularly mentions that once Tasso, angry at his incredulity, told him that he should see the spirit with his own eyes. Accordingly next day, when they were talking together

together, and sitting by the fire, Tasso suddenly
 darted his eyes to a window in the room, and
 sat so intent; that, when Manfo spoke to him,
 he returned no sort of answer. At last he
 turned to him, and said, ' Behold the friendly
 spirit, who is courteously come to converse
 with me; look at him, and perceive the truth
 of my words.' Manfo immediately threw his
 eyes toward the spot; but with his keenest
 vision could see nothing; but the rays of the
 sun shining thro' the window into the chamber.
 While he was thus staring, Tasso had entered
 into lofty discourse with the spirit, as he per-
 ceived from his share of the dialogue; that of
 the spirit was not audible to him; but he so-
 lemnly declares that the discourse was so grand
 and marvellous, and contained such lofty things,
 expressed in a most unusual mode, that he re-
 mained in extacy, and did not dare to open his
 mouth so much as to tell Tasso that the spirit
 was not visible to him. In some time the spirit
 being gone, as Manfo could judge, Tasso turned
 to him with a smile, and said, he hoped he was
 now convinced. To which Manfo replied, that
 he had indeed heard wonderful things, but had
 seen nothing. Tasso said, ' Perhaps you have
 heard

heard and seen more than ——— : he then paused; and Manio, seeing him in silent meditation, did not care to perplex him with further questions.

THE high things, which Manio heard, doubtless originated from Tasso's warm attachment to the Platonic philosophy; that sublime issue of dreams and visions. I would remark, upon the whole subject of this letter, that it is a woeful proof of the weakness of the most exalted mind, when it lays the rein upon the neck of imagination. A man of genius cannot take too much care to prevent his supernatural fancy from assuming any power over common life. The effect of imagination upon the mind is like that of lime upon a fruit-tree; a little buried at the root, will make it healthy and flourishing; but too much will totally destroy it.

BEFORE I conclude, it may be proper to observe, that the genuine Life of Tasso by Manio was, to the best of my knowledge, never published. This now quoted, which is generally called Manio's Life of Tasso, is in fact only a translation of the original Italian, and is not heard of.

transcribed from his; as we may judge from the title, which is, *Vita di Torquato Tasso scritta da Gio. Battista Manso, &c. Al sereniss. Sig. Duca d' Urb. &c.* The dedication is signed by the publisher Evangelisto Deuchino; and I know not if he be not the author. The work is however equally valuable as if it had been written by Manso; the author calling him his intimate friend, and being intrusted by him with Tasso's MS. correspondence. I suppose Manso's Life was brief; it seems in this work to be transcribed with great additions.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

ON different late occasions of literary forgery hath been without any enquiry ever being of propriety, or impropriety. Some have pronounced it, ridiculously partake of the crime of penal forgery; and have said that he who will publish a new production as ancient would forge an obligation. Others with great justice assert, that nothing can be more innocent; that the fiction of ascribing a piece to antiquity, which in fact doth not belong to it, can in no sort be more improper than the fiction of a poem or novel; that in both the delight of the reader is the only intention.

INDEED those innocents who call such forgery criminal forget that they are blaspheming their saviour and their religion; for the whole parables of Jesus Christ, which are narrated with circumstances that most strongly imply them
to

to be true, yet are allowed fictitious, fall under this head. Nor is there more falsehood in Marivaux's telling us that one of his novels was found in pulling down an old partition; in Mr. Walpole's account of his Castle of Otranto being a translation from an Italian romance; in Macpherson's Ossian if you will; than in any of the sacred fables, wherein strict truth is sacrificed to the pleasure of the hearer.

PERHAPS in fact nothing can be more heroic and generous in literary affairs than a writer's ascribing to antiquity his own production; and thus sacrificing his own fame to give higher satisfaction to the public. It certainly partakes of that nobility of soul, which is content with its own suffrage; and ranks the author among those who

Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.

People of shallow understandings are always the most suspicious of being made dupes, and are the most clamorous when they find they are so: those of deeper minds are not deceived by the fiction, as to their judgment; yet their fancy admits the deceit, and receives
higher

higher pleasure from it, than it possibly could, were no deceit used.

Magnanima menzogna, or quando è il vero
Si bello, che si possa a te preporre?

THERE are however certain kinds, and even certain modes, of literary forgery that may justly be held improper; for that is the highest reproach that can be applied to the worst kinds of them, none being in the least injurious to society. Of the improper kind is forgery of histories; as those of Berosus, and Manetho, by Annius of Viterbo; or works of instruction, as the book of Dominico Flocci *De Magistratibus Romanis* ascribed to Fenestella; and, in short, of all the sorts of writing in which truth is the object. Poetry and romance are sacred to fiction, and it can never be pushed too far.

Pictoribus atque Poetis

QUIDLIBET AUDENDI semper fuit æqua potestas.

Yet with one exception as to the mode: for instance, had Muret, when he forged the verses ascribed to Afranius so exquisitely, sent them to Joseph Scaliger, not in common writing,

ing, but transcribed on vellum, and fumigated with art; so as to appear part of an ancient manuscript, I doubt of its propriety; tho it would have been even in that case an imposition only worthy of laughter to men of sense; but to weak minds every thing is a crime.

I shall close my letter with an applicable quotation from Mr. Addison upon this subject, to be found in No. 542 of the Spectator. ' Some,' observes he, ' say an author is guilty of falsehood, when he talks to the public of manuscripts which he never saw, or describes scenes of action, or discourse, in which he was never engaged. But these gentlemen would do well to consider there is not a fable, or parable, which ever was made use of, that is not liable to this exception; since nothing, according to this notion, can be related innocently, which was not once matter of fact.'

LETTER

L E T T E R XLV.

IT would doubtless be going too far to say that the Romans had no original writers ; and, if you look into my former letters, you will find that I made no such assertion.

YET their original authors are very few ; and, if you please, this letter shall briefly recapitulate their eminent writers, and distinguish those that may justly receive the high distinction of Original. An order nearly chronological shall be followed, and they only mentioned whose works have reached us.

PLAUTUS, a poet too much neglected, his works having infinitely more merit than those of Terence, is however not original, except perhaps in one or two plays.

TERENCE need not be mentioned, his plays being mere translations. Had only one of those been preserved, his fame would have

stood six degrees higher, according to the number of his dramas; the perfect similarity of which evinces that he was possessed of not one spark of genius, even as a translator.

LUCRETIUS was not altogether original, there being Greek Philosophic poems of the same kind by Empedocles, and others, which are lost; but, as we know not that he took any thing from them, as his episodes in particular, and his whole poem in general, breathe a bold spirit of apparent originality, put him down in the middle rank, between Originals and Imitators.

CICERO, nor Cæsar, cannot be called original in any view.

SALLUST is an evident imitator of Thucydides, and Livy of Herodotus; yet they are both superior to their originals. Still they are imitators.

VIRGIL is the most pitiful imitator of the whole Roman writers, as was shewn on a former occasion.

CATULLUS

CATULLUS appears to me not original, the hendecasyllabi, his favorite vehicle, being Grecian. Two or three of his pieces are known to be translations without acknowledgement; a strong proof against the rest.

TIBULLUS appears to have the first claim to originality of perhaps all the Roman writers. Callimachus and Philetas wrote Elegies; but they were not amatory, nor plaintive. Athenæus tells us, that Callimachus wrote an Elegy on a victory: and I learn from no ancient that any one of them was on the subject of love. His hymns, which have reached us, say little for his talents. The elegies of Philetas are sometimes quoted by obscure ancient writers, but from these quotations we judge that their subjects were remote from those of Tibullus. Upon the whole, I set down this exquisite poet as original.

PROPERTIUS is not; because Tibullus wrote before him. He is very inferior to Tibullus in every respect; and is in fact a mere pedant in love. I must remark on the beginning of the First Elegy of his Third Book,

Callimachi manes, et Coi sacra Philetæ,

In vestrum, quæso, me finite ire nemus:

Primus ego ingredior, puro de fonte sacerdos,

Italia per Graios orgia ferre choros.

that the reference to Callimachus and Philetas only points at the elegiac stanza used by them, not at the subject: and that we need not wonder at the boast in the last couplet, when we reflect that Virgil hath the impudence to say the same; tho twenty Latin poets had stolen from the Greeks before he was born.

I DOUBT much if Horace be original in any of his odes, but they are his worst work, for he is certainly a very middling lyric poet: we must estimate him by his chief works, his Satires, and his Epistles: and in them, especially in the last, heavens! what an original, what an exquisite writer! In the Satires he is happy, in the Epistles superlatively so. That to the Pisos, when properly understood, which we of this age are now happily enabled to do from Mr. Colman's most ingenious and acute translation and commentary, is full of as much good sense, and lucid order, as the epistolary plan can require. By the way let me add, from

Mr. Colman's just idea of this epistle, that the magisterial rule, of not making a drama shorter or longer than five acts, seems to be addressed to him of the younger Pisos who had written a play, and who had probably extended it beyond that number, as Sophocles hath sometimes done. Horace, as an argument to persuade him to suppress his piece, which is the intention of his epistle, fixes it as an absolute rule, tho indeed from no authority, that no drama should exceed, or fall short of, five acts. This rule, would he say, you have not complied with; therefore your piece is unfit for public view.

To return: from his grand works of the Satires and Epistles, put Horace as an original writer.

OVID was doubtless original in his Metamorphoses, and Fasti; but his originality is futile, and of no value.

CELSUS hath high merit in every view; and may, I believe, be even entitled to the praise of originality upon the whole. A classic edition

of him is much wanted. The late Dr. Brisbane of Middlesex Hospital, author of *The Anatomy of Painting*, had made large MS. collections with this view; which I happened to purchase of a bookseller, and, if you know any man of learning who would use them with their author's intention, they should be at his service.

To Phædrus the merit of being original cannot be denied. As a Fabulist, he is preferable to every writer, not excepting Fontaine himself. Terse, polite, facetious, most elegantly brief, he doth honour even to the age of Augustus. His language in simple beauty exceeds that of Terence; and the language of Terence is his sole merit; that of Phædrus is not his merit, but his dress. The best fables are I. 1. III. 1. 8. 9. IV. 19. 21.: the 17th of Book IV. is a disgrace to his work, as well as some others. *Ubi plura nitent, &c.* Where is the human work that is perfect?

JUVENAL and Persius have each an original style in their Satires; their thoughts are also original. It would be mere cavil then to deny their praise of originality. The first is a writer
of

of amazing moral sublimity.. His Satires, I suspect, are superior to those of Horace, if sublimity be a quality of writing superior to grace, as, for my own part, I have no doubt but it is. The obscurity of Persius throws him quite out of the rank of good writers.

LUCAN is original, but it is the originality of Ovid; an originality of no price. His grand and Stoic diction deserves, however, much praise; and, even considered as a poet, I agree with Heinſius and Corneille, that he is infinitely superior to Virgil.

THE Natural History of Pliny is an original of vast design, and masterly execution.

QUINTILIAN is the only sensible critic of antiquity, the only one who knew method or distinction; but he cannot be called original.

STATIUS, Martial, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, have no claim to originality.

To Tacitus let us bend the knee as the greatest of the original Roman writers, as the first historian who wrote with philosophy for his guide;

guide; as one whose judgment and talents were infinite, and shall never be rivalled. I am not unaware that Milton, in his Familiar Letters, calls Salust the very first of all historians, and Tacitus his imitator. Tho I revere Milton, I revere the truth more, and think that Salust imitates Thucydides, and Tacitus imitates none. Salust deals merely in general reflections; Tacitus in deep and political knowlege.

BOETIUS, the last Roman writer, has a fair claim to originality, and that not of the meanest kind.

SUCH is the list of the more eminent Latin writers. Among them we have found only *Eight* Original, namely, TIBULLUS, HORACE, CELSUS, PHÆDRUS, JUVENAL, PLINY the Elder, TACITUS, BOETIUS; and I suppose, if weighed in the scales of Critical Justice, their various powers of genius would rank them in this order.

I. TACITUS, as a profound historian. None having arisen before, or since, his genius must necessarily be of wonderful rarity and value.

II. Ti-

II. TIBULLUS, as the first writer of Elegy in the world.

III. JUVENAL. A satyric writer of the sublime or first class. As satire is an inferior province of poetry to elegy, he stands after Tibullus; but, as the sublime is superior to the elegant, he precedes

IV. HORACE.

V. PLINY the Elder.

VI. CELSUS.

VII. PHÆDRUS.

VIII. BOETIUS.

LETTER

L E T T E R XLVI.

THE distinction between learning and reading is very just. A man may read all the books ever sent into the world, were it possible, and yet have no title to the appellation of learned. A man of true learning, by the digestion of a strong mind, converts all literary food into wholesome nourishment; whereas, when the receptacle is disordered, or feeble, the more it is crammed the worse. Such is Milton's idea:

But knowlege is as food, and needs no less
 Her temperance over appetite, to know
 In measure what the mind may well contain:
 Oppresses else with surfeit; and soons turns
 Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind,

For a long time after the revival of learning it was confounded with reading. An author could not call snow white, without a long quotation from Aristotle in the margin. This plan having fallen into just contempt, we have now adopted the other extreme, Voltaire, an
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ape who looks big by getting upon the shoulders of giants, after dirtying them all over in getting up, writes history without ever quoting his authorities; and tells us anecdotes as ancient, which are not to be found in any ancient author in print; yet he quotes no MS. Shall we believe him? No. They are the offspring of his own brain. Even for apparent facts he produces no authority; yet history cannot be too well authenticated. As he made his poetry history, so he hath made his history poetry; he is an historical poet, and a poetical historian. This is an instance that there are works in which it is absolutely necessary to shew one's learning by quotations, and not by the essence of the discourse.

For a man's writing on learned subjects with no display of erudition, we can only account by pronouncing him ignorant. The more a man hath read upon any subject, he will doubtless write the better; supposing him a man of any capacity. Is not a rich man better qualified to furnish a banquet that will delight every palate, than one whose poverty frustrates his intention?

NONE

NONE I confess are so fond of shewing their learning as those who have little of it. Parson Adams, you remember, when shewing his half guinea, all he had, says he doth it not from ostentation of riches. Have you never heard a man quote Horace in company, and then, with many apologies for being a man of learning, translate the passage in such a manner as to evince that he had not even the rudiments of erudition? Swift hath well observed that what a man wants in sense is supplied in vanity. The observation is equally just when applied to learning; for sound learning may be defined to be an appropriation of the sense of others.

SUETONIUS, in his books *De Illustribus Grammaticis*, tells us that Cornelius Nepos to whom the work of Victor *De viris Illustribus*, read in schools in spite of its bad Latin, is ascribed, wrote a treatise *De discrimine literati et eruditi*. And one Poiret hath written a book *De eruditione solida et falsa*. I have not read it, but the title is a good one. Solid science I think may be defined, That which is useful to man, either individually or socially. This definition includes elegant learning, for what pleases a man
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is highly useful to him. The dispute whether poetry, for instance, is meant to be useful or pleasing, is idle. What is pleasing is useful. Poetry is only useful by amusing. The time is past when it preserved laws, and gave social manners to savage nations. The harp of Orpheus sounds no more. This unexpected metaphor brings to my mind a droll anecdote, told by Lucian, in his treatise *Against an ignorant man who bought a number of books*, which I shall beg leave to lay before you, as a lively picture of the futility of any science when canvassed by inadequate powers of mind.

WHEN the Thracian Bacchanals tore Orpheus to pieces, they say that his harp was thrown into the river Hebrus with his bleeding head upon it. While the head sung a lamentable elegy on the fate of its late proprietor, the harp, touched by the wind, accompanied it with a solemn strain, till swimming down the Egean sea the mournful concert arrived at Lesbos. The Lesbians, taking them up, buried the head in the spot where, in Lucian's time, stood the temple of Bacchus; and hung up the lyre in the Temple of Apollo.

Neanthus,

Neanthus, the son of **Pittacus** the tyrant, who had heard the wonderful qualities of this harp, that it tamed wild beasts, and moved even trees and rocks, and that, since the time of **Orpheus**, it had never been touched, had a violent desire to try its effects. With this view he bribed the priest, who had it in keeping, to give it to him, and hang up one quite similar in its place. **Neanthus** wisely thought it was not proper to use it by day, nor in the city, lest he should bring the houses about his ears, but, hiding it under his robe, went by night to try it in the environs. Being quite ignorant of music, he began scraping upon it at a strange rate, but with no small pride and satisfaction, as deeming himself the worthy heir of the music of **Orpheus**. The town dogs who, I suppose, were all turned loose into the streets at night, as is now the custom in Turkey, came to the sound in crouds. **Neanthus** in transport imagined, now the beasts had come, the other effects would follow, and looked sharp around to see if a rock and a tree were coming toward him dancing a minuet. Poor man! he was wofully deceived! The dogs had only come, thinking the strange noise proceeded

ceeded from a wolf, or a wild hog; and enraged by the horrid din tore its unfortunate author to pieces.

To return, for I am wandering like Montaigne, tho with a juster title to wander; there is no doubt but elegant literature forms a great branch of true learning, being in fact nearly as useful to man as the most solid parts of it; for poetry may be regarded as of almost equal utility with philosophy. The one amuses life, and diverts care by that sweet pliability of man's spirit which Sterne speaks of; the other instructs us to lessen our care. The effect is almost the same.

USEFUL learning may often be distinguished from false by the congenial delight, which the first affords to the human mind. Nature hath exquisitely contrived that the true pleasure and the interest of man should walk hand in hand, as she covers the fruit with the flower. To this purpose I must again beg leave to quote Lucian, for an observation as extensive as it is beautiful. In his excellent work, On writing history, he tells us that——In the propriety of

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any thing lies its greatest beauty. He is speaking of false ornaments: but take his own words, for they should be written with letters of gold in the temple of Criticism. ΕΚΑΣΤΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΔΗ ΙΔΙΟΝ ΤΙ ΚΑΛΟΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ. This sentiment may likewise be applied to pleasure, and utility. Nature having seldom separated them; and having in particular sprinkled the paths of false science with thorns, and those of the true with roses.

THE inveterate antipathy of ignorance to science, and of those possessors of false learning to those inheriting the true, is well known; and is easily accounted for by the analogical aversion of owls, bats, and other nocturnal monsters, to the light of the sun. You cannot imagine how easy it is for a blockhead to sneer at erudition. It is sometimes very diverting to see ingenious and profound arguments, detailed by a man of learning upon any point turned against him, in high triumph, by dunces, who could never have thought of those arguments, had not they been dugged from the mines of science with great labour, and presented to them forged into weapons.

TRUE

TRUE science we have defined to be that which is useful to man ; it follows, that false science is that which is useless to him. To this last kind many more branches of what is called knowlege may be referred, than is generally imagined : but to point them out, without adducing reasons for classing them under false science, were unjust and absurd ; and the production of reasons would form a treatise, and not a letter.

As I began with a quotation from Milton, so I shall close with another ; *Ut pes et caput uni Reddantur formæ.*

Who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior ;
(And what he brings what need he elsewhere seek ?)
Uncertain and unsettled still remains ;
Deep vers'd in books, and shallow in himself ;
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
And trifles, (for choice matters,) worth a sponge ;
As children gathering pebbles on the shore.

LETTER XLVII.

WHEN I lately gave you my thoughts upon the Advancement of Learning since the time of Lord Bacon, I believe I did not speak of Moral Philosophy and Social Science, at so great length, as the vast importance of those, the grandest parts of knowledge, would require. The reason was that my Letter had, before I came to these points, exceeded all bounds; and I was willing to make all the haste to a conclusion, which I decently could. But as I look upon these two articles as forming the very essence of human wisdom; and to be of themselves more weighty than all its other branches put together, I now request your permission to present you with a few thoughts upon them; expecting, as usual, to be favoured with yours in return, that, by the collision of our thoughts, in this other species of conversation, the flame of truth may be struck out.

MORAL

MORAL Philosophy considers man as an individual principally: but as his transactions, as an individual, are, of necessity, blended with those of other individuals, Social Science mingles with Moral Philosophy by imperceptible shades. They had therefore better be united under the common title of **THE ART OF LIFE**.

How surprizing is it, my friend, what a mortifying instance of the blindness of man to his prime interest, that, while other arts are so diligently explored by many penetrating minds, this transcendent art, the sovereign of all arts, **THE ART OF LIFE**, should be almost, with propriety, to be regarded as an undiscovered continent in the globe of science! Yet how wide, how noble, a subject for didactic poetry; and for the keenest and most diligent examination of philosophy!

LORD BACON well observes that "Life consists not in novelties or subtleties." It is indeed a trite observation, that when a man hath seen one family he hath seen the world. It follows that **THE ART OF LIFE** may with the

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greatest

greatest propriety be defined, and reduced to a science.

To do this with ease the middling rank, the happiest and best of all, cannot be described with too minute a detail. This may be considered as the subject of the concerto, to use a musical metaphor; remarks and examples from the extremes of life may, to pursue the figure, be regarded as airs.

THE ART OF LIFE can never be examined with too scrupulous a minuteness. Every trifle is important to man, himself a trifle, and his life a trifle. You cannot therefore expect that this Letter should enter into any detail: it can only just hint at the chief divisions; each of which deserves the acute investigation of a different author. An author too out of the common run of authors; an author who is a man of the world.

THE chief heads of this ART would I suppose be found to be these. *FIRST*, MAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL, considered with regard to
 1. His body in 1. Its structure. 2. The Natural History of Man. 3. The art of preventing
 4. The

4. The art of curing, diseases. II. His Mind; leaving the metaphysic part out of all question; and only examining it by its palpable faculties, so to speak, of 1. Judgment and reason. 2. Memory. 3. Imagination. *SECONDLY*, MAN IN SOCIETY. I. History of the Progress of Society. II. Particular description of the civilized state of society. III. Advices for the further improvement of society. IV. Domestic society considered in these subdivisions: 1. Duties and affections of, 1. husband, 2. wife: children. 3. of parents. 4. of friends, &c. 5. Rules, and most minute details of œconomy and the conduct of life. 6. Pleasures and amusements of life, with hints for their improvement. V. Civil society, or the art of conducting every kind of business; including the science of polished manners, and what is called knowlege of the world.

SUCH I imagine ought to be the general idea of this GRAND ART. Some of its branches have been already cultivated, but by no means with sufficient care. Charron and Nettleton are perhaps the most important authors, whose works in this way deserve any mention. The

first of these in particular is a very valuable writer; but neither of them come up to the idea proposed. The grand reason why the practical happiness of man is so desert a field of observation is, that he hath never yet discovered that important things, as theories of worlds, &c. are trifles to him; and trifling things, as domestic pleasures, &c. are to him matters of the last importance. The happiness of man is compounded of a variety of minute particles of wisdom and pleasure: it is an exquisite concert produced by a variety of instruments; most of them very minute in themselves, yet of great effect upon the whole. Now no writer hath thought of laying down the art of tuning these several instruments. No: that were beneath the dignity of philosophy! It is judged enough to lay down rules for the concert, without enquiring whether the instruments are in proper tune, or not. Hence, to drop the metaphor, the general titles of books on this subject, On Virtue and Happiness, On Wisdom. The writers did not know that their very titles were presumptuous to madness; and that one hundredth part of their plan was far beyond the cultivation of any one author,

author. This affectation of being important destroys the merit of all writers on this subject. They did not know that they would have been infinitely more important had they been less so. The saying of Parmenio to Philotas, 'My son make thyself less,' may with great truth be applied to all practical writers on human wisdom; with this implied addition, 'that thou mayest be greater.' Man! Proud Man! Must thy pride be for ever the destruction of thy real knowlege, and of thy happiness?

I HAVE dwelt so long upon this preliminary part, because it forms the very basis and foundation of the ART now spoken of. Till authors can be persuaded to drop generalities, and minutely examine particulars; not upon theoretical, but upon experimental principles, it is in vain to expect any progress in this great science.

MAN's happiness, which is the only final purpose of this ART, hath been already observed to be an aggregate composed of many minute parts. Perhaps nothing contributes more to it than the knowlege of economy,
yet

yet not one book has ever been written upon this point; tho' nothing is more capable of being illustrated by details and examples.

THIS may serve as an explanation of my meaning when recommending **THE ART OF LIFE** to be treated by philosophers at length, in its minute heads, not taken in gross. I speak of examples, because it is a trite observation, that, example goes further than precept: and because, without examples, the several divisions of this knowledge will be more dry, and far less instructive.

THESE examples ought always, if possible, to be taken from real life; or to bear as strict a resemblance of it as possible: at any rate they ought to be related in the simplest manner. Indeed the whole works, upon any branch of this science, ought to be written in the most simple style imaginable; being intended for the instruction of all ranks of society.

ANY further remarks on this head I shall not venture upon. I cannot however omit observing that, in all well regulated governments, a **DOMESTIC TRIBUNAL** should be instituted,

stituted, composed of respectable fathers of families; who should have power to regulate in a mild manner all serious disputes between father and son, or the like. The vast power that parents have over the happiness of their children, gives many depraved parents an unlimited tyranny, and the worst species of it; for this always attacks the very vitals of domestic life, whereas tyrannic government seldom or never goes so far. Many parents make their children useless and miserable for life, and disinherit them in the end, for no cause but their own diabolical caprice. If children are disobedient, the parents can always punish them; but if parents are tyrannical, there is no redress for their unfortunate offspring. The want of such a tribunal is a disgrace to the legal prudence of every modern country; for I think something like it actually existed in one or two of the states of antiquity.

I MUST not conclude without remarking further that Lord Bacon's own hints, upon civil society and business, are very valuable, as every sketch of such a matter is: they may be regarded with justice as forming a model of a series of documents upon this subject.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R XLVIII.

NOBODY will deny that in some few passages of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, and those very minute, Tasso hath admitted a style a little too figurative. Yet it may with great justice be asserted that there are more blemishes in the *Iliad*, than in the *Gerusalemme*; and I question not but there are even very near as many instances of excessive figure, and false decoration, or in short what our critics call tinsel. But if Tasso should be found to exceed Homer in this, which I very much doubt, he hath many excuses which Homer had not: such as the Platonic, or metaphysical, style, introduced into Italian poetry by Petrarch; Tasso's own fondness for Platonism; and the very spirit of refinement which pervades Italian minds, Italian thoughts, and Italian language.

T H E R E

THERE is no human work, however perfect upon the whole, that can be pronounced to be faultless. Nay a faultless work is commonly an insipid one; that is, hath the greatest of faults; is all one fault, without particular faults. Where a writer rises to uncommon excellence, his mind, feeble from the lofty flight, will be apt to sink beneath even its common level. This remark is as old as the time of Longinus, who well marks the vast preference to be given to an author, who, with great faults, hath great beauties, over him who hath neither fault nor beauty. I do not however mean to apply it to Tasso, whose faults are scarce and minute; and his excellencies great and numerous.

In estimating the defects of a valuable author, we should make ourselves his cotemporaries. If Homer deserves pardon for the simplicity of the manners he paints, because in his time manners were quite of primitive simplicity; doth not Tasso, in like manner, deserve favour for his style being now and then too figurative, while we all know that the Italian style of his age was figurative to excess? Do
not

not we pardon to Shakspeare his quibbles, and to Milton his religion? Let us only make half the allowance for Tasso, whose faults are not so numerous, nor his merits of so high a rank; and it is enough.

THE worth of the Gerusalemme I may perhaps be led to estimate on a future occasion. The subject of my present Letter shall be an equitable enumeration of what are called the *conceits* to be found in it. I have just finished a perusal of it, made with a view to mark every one that arose; and I doubt not but I have done it with a severe eye. You shall have my list, which I believe will be found neither incurious nor unuseful, after I have observed that in Eleven of the Twenty Books of the Gerusalemme, there is not the smallest shadow of too figurative a style. These Eleven Books are the I. III. V. VI. VIII. IX. XI. XIII. XIV. XV. XVII. The passages that are suspicious in the other books are as follow.

No. 1. Move fortezza il gran pensier; l'arresta
Poi la vergogna, e'l virginal decoro
Vince fortezza, anzi s'accorda, e face
Sé vergognosa, e la vergogna audace.

Canto II. Stanza 17.

To

To this he seems to have been induced with a view to fill up his stanza; another apology for some of his *cancetti*, not before mentioned.

No. 2. Questo e quel fuoco, ch'io credea che i cori
Ne dovesse infiammar d'eguali ardori?

Canto II. Stanza 33.

This is Platonic; and might have been written by Petrarch.

No. 3. E fra le felve
Fera a gli uomini parve, uomo a le belve.

II. 40.

No. 4. Ma il chiaro umor, che di sì spesse stille
Le belle gote e'l seno adorno rende,
Opra effetto di foco; il qual' in mille
Petti serpe celato, e vi s'apprende.
O miracol d'Amor, che le faville
Tragge del pianto, e i cor ne l'acqua accende!

PETRARCHA again.

IV. 76.

No. 5. Ma di piu vago sol piu dolce vista
Mifero i' perdo.

VII. 49.

This would likewise have been written by Petrarch; and to accuse Tasso of Petrarchisms would sound as impious in Italian ears as to arraign a writer of Miltonisms would in ours:
both

both being in such admiration that imitations even of their faults are thought meritorious. In Canto VIII. 1. *L'Alba con la fronte di rose e co pie d'oro* is rather bold, but not to excess. Fairfax well translates it: *With roses crown'd, and buskin'd high with gold.* Homer's *rosy-finger'd Morn*, &c. are as bold to the full.

No. 6.

Ch' Apollo inaura

Le rose che l'Aurora ha colorite.

Canto X. Stanza 14.

THIS just Criticism would pronounce false ornament, tho Homer hath passages as glittering.

No. 7. O sasso amato et onerato tanto,

Che dentro hai le mie fiamme, e fuori il pianto!

XII. 96.

This is justly regarded as the most exceptionable passage in the whole Poem; yet it still goes not beyond the model of Petrarca. The story of Tasso's affection for this couplet I recommend to your supreme contempt, with that of Milton's admiration of *Paradise Regained*, and other popular tales, which are believed without vouchers, and without probability.

No. 8.

No. 8. Specchio t'è degno il cielo, e ne le stelle
Puoi riguardar le tue sembianze belle.

Canto XVI. Stanza 22.

This may justly be excused, from the cruel necessity of completing a stanza.

No. 9. O tu che porte
Parte teco di me, parte ne lasci!

XVI. 40.

This likewise smells of Petrarca:

No. 10. E in lui trova impedita
Amor l'entrata, il lagrimar l'uscita.

XVI. 51.

No. 11. E gli forgeva a fronte
Fatta già d'auro la vermiglia aurora.

XVIII. 15.

Fronte fatta d'auro, for *coronata d'auro*, is bold; but I believe not too much so: and I think it might be excused from the example of Homeric diction.

No. 12. Che rendendomi a me, da me mi tolse.

XIX. 95.

ON the same footing with No. 9. The warrior who dies with laughter, because the spleen is wounded, I suspect loses his life by mistake. The passage is XX. 39.

E e

No. 13.

No. 13. Che 'l cadavero pur non resta a i morti.
Canto XX. Stanza 46.

No. 14. Vestirebbe mai forse i membri fui,
Di quel diaspro, ond' ei l'alma ha sì dura?
XX. 66.

SUCH is the list of all the passages in the Gerusalemme that can lie under the least imputation of too much art. Is it long?

THE rest of his style, to the vast amount of about Sixteen Thousand lines, is so well sustained, and rises frequently to such exquisite beauty, as almost to confute the opinion of Longinus, above adduced, with regard to the necessity of great excellencies being accompanied with equal blemishes. His composition taken on the whole is most majestically grave; and of itself sufficiently arraigns its accusers of calumny and falsehood. Mere conceits and tinsel may be found in Guarini; but they who look for them in Tasso, must bring them along with them, else they will not find them.

It is risible to observe Boileau the first to cry out *thief!* with regard to Tasso, when the only time he ever attempted poetry, (for his
satires

satires and epistles, his Imitations as he ought to have called them, are only prose lace put in starch) I mean in his *Ode sur la prise de Namur*, he has written such pitiful tinsel as any Italian schoolboy would have blushed at being even suspected of.

At the same time let the apology of temporary influence, which hath power over the greatest writers, be made for Addison, himself a prose writer of the first rank ; for, in his age, French criticism was quite the vogue, as I am affraid it is too much till this day. As we now lead the French fashions in dress, let us attempt to lead them in literature. To attempt is to succeed.

L E T T E R XLIX.

IN the course of our correspondence, I believe more than one occasion hath arisen of placing the critical abilities of Mr. Addison in no high estimation. But as perhaps stronger proofs may be required in the most innocent attack upon the flightest talents of a writer so deservedly eminent, I shall, if you please, in this Letter produce these stronger proofs. There is another reason which induces me to this disagreeable task, and it is, that the most minute failings of such an author deserve animadversion, for the rocks that have injured a vessel of such supreme rate, would doubtless, if not avoided with caution, prove of immediate fatality to critical adventurers of small size.

THE only writings of Mr. Addison, worthy to be considered as pieces of criticism, occur in the Spectator. This view of his critical errors shall therefore be restricted to that work, and taken in the order in which they arise. It
might

might be made ten times as long ; but I hurry thro it, being sensible that the task is invidious, and feeling it disagreeable.

SPECT. No. 5. Addison hath given more proofs than one of his very slight acquaintance with the Italian language. Armida is, in the opera of Rinaldo, called an Amazonian enchantress, or more properly an enchanting Amazon, (taking *enchanting* in rather an uncommon acceptation) not from her being of the nation of the Amazons, as Addison strangely misunderstands it ; but from her being an enchantress and *virago*. The remark on the Christian Magician is equally absurd. The Magician doth not deal with the devil, as Addison misrepresents it much in the spirit of an old woman, but with angels, the dæmons of Platonism ; who were thought the servants of good men, and none but the good. Before such criticisms no work can stand. The critic totally misrepresents the meaning, and then writes criticisms upon his own misrepresentations. The noted attack on Tasso, which follows these odd blunders, is dismissed in pity and silent contempt. Tasso is innocent of the charge, and must be honour-

ably acquitted. The English of Mr. Addison's violent hatred of the opera is, that he wrote for the English theatre, and was mortified to see it neglected for the Italian.

No. 18. Phædra and Hippolitus is so woful a tragedy, that I know no Italian opera that would not prove a far higher entertainment.

No. 39. A perfect tragedy, the noblest production of human nature! Where is epic poetry? but Addison was writing Cato; and his rules of criticism are always for his own advantage.

His praise of Lee on this occasion, and of Blackmore on another, proves sufficiently the depth of his critical abilities.

No. 40. The tragicomedy is the most natural, and, of consequence, the most proper, style of the drama. Very little learning is required to know that it is not the product of the English stage, but of every stage, ancient and modern; except the French, which is sacred to Sleep.

No. 44. Orestes's plea for not killing the Usurper instantly I believe strikes every reader as futile, and a mere ancient stage-trick.

No. 62.

No. 62. The praise of Bouhours by Addison and Chesterfield will never rescue him from the contempt of every man who hath read or thought much. Good stomachs cannot be satisfied with syllabubs. The critique on Gothic architecture shews the pitiful *gout de comparaison*. Addison did not know that every Art admits of infinite modes of beauty; and that to confine it to one of these modes is the reverse of an attempt to enlarge human knowledge and enjoyment.

No. 160. This essay on Genius cannot be read without laughter, and a certain assurance that the author knew not what it was.

No. 267. What critic ever heard of an *heroic* poem? Why examine a poem upon principles utterly inanalagous to it?

I REMEMBER not that Aristotle allows that Homer's fable wants unity. If he doth, he is a poor critic; if he doth not, Addison is a poorer.

THE perpetual quotations of Aristotle give disgust. Why doth he never quote Nature?

No. 273. A Greek's regard for Achilles must have been very small; like the regard of a Spaniard for a Portuguese,

No. 285. That the names of figures of speech were invented to palliate *defects* of speech, is perhaps the only new critical remark Addison hath ever made; and it is unhappily quite void of foundation. Mr. Addison forgot that grammar was invented for speech, not speech for grammar.

No. 297. There is no occasion in Nature for an epic poem always ending happily. If such a rule existed in the foolish axioms of criticism, Milton knew to despise it. Addison should have drawn new rules from Milton, and not have pretended to judge him by foreign laws, as he doth all along.

No. 315. The criticism on the Third Book of Paradise Lost is not sufficiently severe. It is all beneath the middling from beginning to end.

No. 321. The device of Uriel's descent on a sunbeam is almost praised in Milton: in Tasso it would have been tinsel. Tasso hath nothing
so

so tinfical: but thus it is when critics are ruled by prejudice and not by investigation.

No. 339. The *golden compasses* ought to have been reprobated. All metaphors applied from Art to Nature are the very reverse of sublime.

No. 305. 'The first original of the drama was a religious worship consisting only of a Chorus, which was nothing else, but an hymn to a deity.' There are rather more errors in this sentence than words, as I believe you will judge from former Letters. The deity was Bacchus, yet we are told in the next sentence of *innocence and religion*. Was Mr. Addison so very entire a stranger to Greek science as not to know that the worship of Bacchus was utterly inconsistent with innocence and religion?

No. 412. We are now arrived at the greatest critical effort of Addison; that on the pleasures of imagination. One of the three causes which he lays down as productive of these pleasures is of no foundation. Novelty never pleases, except when accompanied with the other causes Grandeur or Beauty. The first sight of an ugly object only makes it more disgusting than when
use

use hath in some measure reconciled us to it. Dr. Akenfide, you will observe from a communication I made to you some time ago, had struck it out of his Poem, very justly, upon more mature consideration.

It is not novelty, but beauty, that makes natural objects more pleasing in the spring. Beside, they are new to no man. Mr. Addison surely did not mean his criticisms for those who had never seen the beauties of Spring before.

No. 413. Mr. Addison is the first writer who discovered that *final causes lie bare to our observation*. Bacon would have said that final causes are utterly unknown to man. Such is the difference between deep and superficial science. Ignorance is always rash. Knowledge doubts and trembles.

No. 415. 'For every thing that is majestic
'imprints an awfulness and reverence on the
'mind of the beholder, and strikes in with the
'natural greatness of the soul.' Bravissimo!
Cheese is cheese! This is a lively instance of
what they call criticism.

I QUES-

I QUESTION if it was Phidias who proposed to cut Mount Athos into a statue of Alexander. But I beg pardon for such a remark, for nothing is more pardonable than a slip of this kind. Indeed they who remember names and dates seldom remember any thing else.

No. 420. Mr. Addison tells us of the most agreeable talents of an historian; and seems to think they consist in entertaining his reader. If so, fabulous historians are best. The most *agreeable* talent of an historian is to *instruct*. This is done by discussion of human actions, and of the characters who were their agents.

SUCH are the brief remarks which at present occur to me upon the critical errors of Addison. Volumes might have been written to refute several of them; but I know that to you they need only be hinted. Besides I was quite impatient to get rid of this ungrateful task; for Addison is one of my most favorite writers, and nothing but my sacred love of critical equity could have been an inducement to its execution.

THE best writers are perhaps the most liable to faults of a certain kind, in like manner as fertile ground is, where no grain is sown, fertile of weeds. Strong weeds speak a rich soil, nearly as much as strong corn ; yet they ought to be rooted up that they may not injure the harvest.

LETTER

L E T T E R L.

ACCORDING to your desire, I now send you the Confessions of Rousseau, perhaps the most singular production that ever saw the light. Nothing can more strongly prove the near alliance of great genius with madness.

I know of no work that can be mentioned as parallel to Rousseau's; except Cardan's account of his own life.. I know not indeed which is the most extravagant, Cardan's account of his seeing little brazen armies combat round his feet as he lay in bed of a morning, and the like prodigies to be found in the very curious work *De Vita propria*; or Rousseau's visions of his future happiness with Madame Warens, and other day dreams.

A PARALLEL in the manner of Plutarch might I think with ease be instituted between the two works. Rousseau was of great reputation, so was Cardan.: Rousseau superabounds, with

with extravagant egotism as well as the other :
 Rousseau is sometimes almost sublime, so is
 Cardan ; witness this passage of the IX Chapter
 of the latter on fame. ‘ Scribes, inquam, quo-
 ‘ modo legenda : et de qua re præclara, et adeo
 ‘ tibi nota, ut desiderare legentes possint ? Quo
 ‘ stylo, qua sermonis elegantia ut legere susti-
 ‘ neant ? Sic ut legant ? Nonne ævo præterla-
 ‘ bante in singulos dies fiet auctio ut prius
 ‘ scripta contemnantur, nedum negligantur ? At
 ‘ durabunt aliquot annis ? Quot ? Centum ?
 ‘ Mille ? Decies mille ? Ostende exemplum vel
 ‘ unum inter tot millia. Atque omnino cum
 ‘ desitura sint etiam si per reditus mundus re-
 ‘ novaretur, ut Academici volunt, non minus
 ‘ quam si ut initium habuit et finem accepturus
 ‘ est, nil interest an post decimam diem, an
 ‘ decem millia myriadum annorum. Nihil
 ‘ utrumque, et ex æquo ad eternitatis spatium.’
 &c.

SOME of Cardan’s *Præcepta ad Filios*, sub-
 joined to his life, are likewise very good.
 Such as

‘ LÆTE vivite quando licet ; curæ enim
 ‘ hominem atterunt non liberant.’ p. 271.

‘ NOLITE opes effundere nec contemnere:
‘ sunt enim instrumenta omnium bonorum.’
p. 276.

‘ QUÆ facturus es nemini dixeris: ne impe-
‘ diaris vel invidearis.’ p. 278.

LETTER

L E T T E R L I.

AMONG our translations from the Eastern languages, I am surprized that none hath yet appeared in English of the two great works of Mufladin Sadi, the Orchard, and The Rosary, or Flower-garden, as they are quaintly intitled. The original Persian I must confess my ignorance of; but the latter translated into Latin by a Georgius Gentius, in 1655, now lies before me, and considered as an Eastern production of the Thirteenth century hath no small merit. I know not if the first be yet translated.

THE author of *Les Saisons, Poeme*, Paris 1769, I believe M. S. Lambert, hath well translated a number of Sadi's apologues. As I cannot find all his translations in the Rosary, I take it that he hath given some of them from the other work, called *The Orchard*. Knowing your fondness for the Eastern apologue, I inclose my translations of a number of them from both works for your amusement.

A P O.

A P O L O G U E I.

A KING had condemned one of his slaves to death. The slave, in the anguish of his despair, knew no bounds, but abused the prince his master with the most bitter reproaches. What doth he say? said the monarch to his favorite, who stood near the slave. Sir, answered the favorite, he says that the golden gates of paradise open of themselves to the merciful; and he entreats your forgiveness with the most prostrate supplication. I grant him forgiveness, said the king.

A COURTIER, who had been a long time the enemy of the favorite, had heard the real words of the slave. You are grossly deceived, Sir, said he to the Monarch: that wretch reviles you in the most bitter terms. The king answered, the lye is the lye of humanity; thy truth is the truth of cruelty. Then, turning to his favorite, he said, Oh my best friend, thy words SHALL be the truth!

A P O L O G U E II.

I WALKED with my friend during the great heat of the day, under an avenue of lofty trees which afforded a shade impregnable to the blaze of the sun. A rivulet ran by thro banks of the freshest and greenest turf. I saw the visir Karoun stretched upon that turf. He was asleep.

GREAT GOD, said I, doth not the remembrance of the evil he hath done prevent Karoun from enjoying the blessings of repose! Doth the soft murmur of the sighs of the unhappy only sooth him to profound slumber!

My friend understood me, and said, God sometimes giveth sleep to the wicked that the good may be at rest.

A P O L O G U E III.

A BLIND man had a wife, whom he loved to excess, tho he was told that she was very ugly. A physician offered to cure him. He would not consent to it. I should lose, said he, the love which I feel for my wife. That love is my happiness.

THE

THE troops of Cosroes were vanquished the day of an eclipse of the sun. The Persians, adorers of the sun, imagined that phenomenon denounced destruction to the empire. This imagination extinguished every spark of their courage.

ERROR may constitute the happiness of an individual; but it is always the source of misery to a nation.

A P O L O G U E IV.

ONE day I went home with a mind filled with chagrin. After having, in my heart, satirized all conditions of men, and even myself, I fell into a profound sleep, and had a dream. I imagined myself transported to a solitude, remote from the vices and follies of mankind. I walked with tranquil joy in a large forest, which I thought protected my cottage from the violent winds of Arabia; and forgot in its shades the caprices of life.

THE sun arose. His rays gilded the verdure over my head with feeble transparency. I heard

the songs of a multitude of birds. I was attentive to all their accents. I observed the diversity of their forms; of their plumage; of their flight.

HEAVEN lent me of a sudden the power of understanding their several dialects. The eagle railed at the owl on her weakness of sight: the turtle dove spoke very ill of the hawk, who expressed contempt for his weakness: the black-bird was very jocose on the cry of the eagle: the jay and the magpie mocked each other; they reproached the crow with his melancholy appearance; and said that the sparrow had a vulgar look.

THERE suddenly descended from heaven a most extraordinary apparition. It was a youth whose colour resembled roses sprinkled over pure snow by some playful virgin of Circassia. His wings were of the most delicate azure, and their edges streaked with gold, as the beams of the morning streak the summer sky. His locks were black as ebony. His eyes were blacker than ebony. No hypocrite could bear their piercing radiance, which went to the bottom of the soul. He alighted on a lofty plane-tree, whose

whose height surpassed the cedars of the forest. He called the different birds by their names. They obeyed, and flocked around him, perching on the branches of the surrounding cedars. They trembled in silence. He spoke.

HEAR what I reveal to you by command of the Most High. Ye are all equal in merit in his sight. Ye only differ in qualities, because ye are destined to different functions.

THOU, the eagle, art born for war: thy cry, expressive of force, cannot have harmony. The owl could not have caught reptiles and insects, of which she was made to clear the earth, if her eyes, of minute and nocturnal vision, could have met the blaze of the meridian sun. The nightingale and linnet, it is true, are of delicate constitution; but how else could they possess delicacy of song? The turtle is made for love; the hawk for rapine. Remain in your respective conditions without regret, and without pride. There are differences in your kinds, but there are no faults.

AT these words I saw the birds disperse thro the forest; and the genius flew to heaven darting at me a look that spoke.

I WAKED and said : shall I then expect from the *cadi* the mildness of the courtier ? From the *iman* the freedom of the warrior ? From the merchant the disinterestedness of the sage ? From the sage the activity of the ambitious ? O heavenly spirit, it is Sadi whom thou hast instructed ! Thy lessons shall be engraven on my heart, and my lips shall repeat them to the sons of men !

O MY brethren, we depart together, but on different voyages : some to the north, and others to the regions of the sun. We require not the same clothes nor the same provisions. We live in a family of which the father hath furnished us with very different accoutrements. Why should he who prunes the vines hold the instruments of tillage ?

APOLOGUE V.

THREE inhabitants of Balck travelled in company. They found a treasure, and divided it among them ; then continued their journey, conversing together on the use which they meant to make of their riches. The victuals,
which

which they had brought along with them, were consumed: they agreed that one of them should go to the city for more, while the other two waited his return in a pleasant spot where they intended to dine. The youngest accepted the commission, and departed.

He said to himself on the way, I am rich, but I would have been much more so had I been alone at the time of finding this treasure—These men are the robbers of my riches—Can I not resume them? Yes with ease. I have only to poison the victuals which I am about to buy. At my return I will say I have dined in the city. My companions will eat, and die, without suspicion. I have now only the third of the treasure. I will then have all.

MEANWHILE the two other travellers said to each other, It was foolish to allow that young man to associate with us. We have been obliged to share the treasure with him. His part would have much augmented ours; and we should without him have been rich indeed——But he returns and we have swords——

THE young man returned with the poisoned provisions. His companions were his assassins. They eat. They died. The treasure was again to find : again to be the source of crimes.

APOLOGUE VI.

A KING of Chorazan said to his visir, The people of Bactriana are commanded by a prince of feeble talents and without experience. They have no allies ; and the conquest is easy. Assemble my forces, and march against them.

I OBEY, answered the visir ; but by what right will you ravish their liberties from a nation who are not your foes ?

THAT conquest, said the king, will encrease my power. Is it a crime to signalize my courage, and extend my empire ?

CAN it be innocent, replied the visir, to give your subjects and the world an example of injustice ?

APO-

A P O L O G U E VII.

COSROES caused this inscription to be engraven on his diadem: *Many have possessed this. Many will possess it. O posterity, thy steps will be imprinted on the dust of my tomb!*

A P O L O G U E VIII.

IN proportion as time hath made to pass before my eyes a larger number of events; and since the colour of my hair is that of the swans who sport in the waters of the garden of the great king; I have thought that the supreme Arbiter of our lot, who made man and virtue, never leaves without pleasure the heart of the good, nor a benevolent action without reward, Hear, sons of men! Hear this faithful recital,

IN one of these fertile vallies, which intersect the chain of the mountains of Arabia, lived for a long time a rich and ancient shepherd. I knew him well. They called him happy. He was content. One day that he walked on the brink of a torrent, thro an alley of palm trees, the brown foliage

foliage of which diversified the verdure of the cedars, that crowned the surrounding hills, he heard a voice which sometimes filled the vale with piercing cries; and of which the melting murmurs were, at other intervals, not distinguishable from the sound of the stream.

THE old shepherd ran to the spot from whence the voice arose. He beheld, at the foot of a rock, a young man half-reclined upon the sand. His clothes were torn. His locks fell in disorder over his face, in which beauty shone thro the thick shade of grief, as the sun from a morning cloud. His cheeks wet with tears; his head bent on his bosom; he resembled a rose dashed with the summer storm. The rich shepherd was moved. He accosted the youth, and said, Son of misery! come to my arms. Let me press to my bosom the man of grief. He is my brother, His sorrow is mine.

THE young man lifted his head in profound silence. He looked upon the old man as astonished that benevolence and pity were yet existing on earth. The sole appearance of the venerable shepherd inspired immediate confidence.

dence. His moist eyes were full of softness and sympathetic fire. They had that tenderness which makes the unhappy speak.

RISING from the ground the youth threw himself into the arms of the shepherd, calling with a voice that made all the circling hills resound, O Father! O more than father! When he was calmed a little by the conversation and caresses of the old man, he thus answered his repeated questions.

BEHIND these lofty cedars, at the foot of the highest of these mountains, stands the house of Shel-Adar, father of Fatmé. The hut of my father is not far from thence. Fatmé is the most beautiful of the daughters of the hills. I offered myself to guide the flocks of her father, and he consented to it. He is rich. The father of Fatmé is rich:—and my father is poor. I love Fatmé. Fatmé returns my affection. Her father perceived it: we confessed our loves to him; and he wishes to constrain me to leave the country in which his daughter dwells. I threw myself at his feet; and said, O father of Fatmé, let me at least reside with my father.

I con-

I consent never more to speak to Fatmé. I will never enquire of her heart. I will promise that I will not. But give me to conduct one of thy most remote flocks. O permit me at least to serve the father of Fatmé! Shel-Adar hath refused me all: He hath treated me with harshness, while I had not strength to flee from his house, even before his violence. He threatens Fatmé. Alas, I am now distant from her habitation! Fatmé is unhappy. My father is infirm. My mother is no more. I have two brethren, so small that they could hardly reach the lowest branches of these palm trees. My father and my brothers received all their subsistence from me. The bounty of Shel-Adar is no longer my support. Can misery be equal to mine?

My son, said the old man, let us go together to the pastures of Shel-Adar. I will assist thee to walk. Come. The youth consented to it: he dragged his steps along with much difficulty. Drawing near to the residence of Shel-Adar they beheld his daughter. She was lost in melancholy. The young man said to the aged, Behold Fatmé! The shepherd without reply entered the house of Shel-Adar, and spoke to him thus.

A DOVE

A DOVE of Aleppo was carried to Damascus. She lived there with a mate of the country. Their master fearing the dove of Aleppo would one day return, and entice the other with her, had them put them asunder. They no longer would eat the grain which he held to them from his own hand. They both sickened. They died.

O SHEL-ADAR, divide not those who only live, because they live together. This young man, whom thou hast driven from thy house, is he a son of virtue?

SHEL-ADAR answered: The prophet be my witness in what I am about to speak. As the white lily in a bed of narcissuses is that youth among the faithful. He surpasses all the young shepherds in piety, goodness, and vigilance. But—he is poor.

AN, said the old shepherd, I and my sons have flocks without number! I possess all the rich valley of Horafa. The riches of the young man shall be my care. A large portion of my flocks shall be at thy door on the morrow, providing thou wilt give him Fatme.

SHEL-

SHEL-ADAR knew the fame of the old shepherd. He promised his daughter. The venerable ancient retired.

ON the morrow he sent to the residence of Shel-Adar a number of flocks, more white than the snow on the tops of the mountains in winter; and herds of horses more beautiful and nimble than those that carried the prophet.

SOME days after this worthy action, the rich and good Shepherd went towards the cedars, beneath which stood the dwelling of Shel-Adar. Attend, O sons of men, attend.

THE good shepherd was leaving a grove, and entering on a meadow, thro which ran a stream bordered with fig-trees. He saw upon the grass Shel-Adar, who held the hand of an old man, whose countenance expressed wisdom and gaiety. The old shepherd saw them, and stopped to enjoy all the pleasure which the sight of the happiness of his brethren in age could afford. The old men had a number of youths about them; among whom were two children, who sometimes played on the grass, and then would come to caress the two fathers. They were well-

well-clad; they had all the health, vivacity, and gaiety of their age. The good shepherd easily understood that these children were the brothers of the young husband of Fatmé; and that the old man, who held Shel-Adar by the hand, was their father.

NIGHER to the good shepherd, by the shade of the grove, Fatmé and her husband sat on the grass. In motionless rapture they often looked upon each other with intense eagerness. They smiled so sweetly that it seemed that pleasure alone had ever printed its vestige on their faces. Often the young couple interrupted their delicious silence by lively, but modest, caresses. One might see that they were restrained by the presence of their fathers. Often they looked around them; and appeared intoxicated with the felicity of all that was dear to them, more than even with their own. Their joy, which inspired all the company, manifested itself equally in all their faces; as the same sun produces like flowers on all the branches of the orange-tree.

The

THE good shepherd looked on each of them by turns. He then chanced to turn his eyes toward the neighbouring meadows. He beheld the flocks which he had given to Shel-Adar. They surpassed those of Shel-Adar, among which they were mingled, and were distinguishable by their superior whiteness and beauty. Their guides sung the happiness of their masters and their own own.

SONS of men, ye have heard my faithful recital. Be virtuous ye poor, that the rich may be benevolent. Be benevolent ye rich, that the poor may be virtuous.

A P O L O G U E IX.

NOURSHIVAN the Just, being one day a hunting, would have eaten of the game, which he had killed, but from the consideration that, after dressing it, his attendants had no salt to give it a relish. He sent at last to buy some at the next village; but with severe injunctions not to take it without paying for it. What would be the harm, said one of his courtiers, if the king did not pay for a little salt? Nourshivan

van

van answered, If a king gathers an apple in the garden of one of his subjects, on the morrow the courtiers cut down all the trees.

A P O L O G U E X.

A VIRTUOUS king, in an angry moment, ordered one of his slaves, who was innocent, to be put to death. O king, said he, my punishment ends with my life: thine begins at the close of mine. He was forgiven.

A P O L O G U E XI.

THE son of Aaron Al-Raschid came to him with bitter complaints against a man who had slandered his mother; and demanded vengeance. O my son, said Aaron Al-Raschid, thou art about to be thyself the worst slanderer of thy mother, by persuading the world that she hath not taught thee to forgive.

A P O L O G U E XII.

A MAN had quitted the society of the dervises, and entered into that of the philosophers. What difference do you find, said I to him, between a philosopher and a dervise? He answered, Both swim across a great river with their brethren of men. The dervise keeps at a distance from the company, that he may swim at ease, and arrive alone on the opposite shore. The philosopher, on the contrary, swims with the rest, and often stretches forth his hand in their assistance.

A P O L O G U E XIII.

NOURSHIVAN the Just, being but prince of Chorazan, and subject of the king of kings, loved pleasures and lived with splendor; his riches were bounteously disposed far and near. The most excellent singers, the most skilful musicians, came to entreat his audience; and the first audience made them opulent. When he at length sat upon the throne of the world, they flocked from all parts of the earth. He
heard

heard them with pleasure; but paid them with far less liberality than when he was a subject prince. One of the musicians dared to complain. May heaven, said he, be propitious to Nourshivan! Empire hath enlarged his wealth, and contracted his mind. Ye kings, write the answer of the Just in letters of gold; and, while ye read it every day after your morning devotions, again bend the knee in adoration, for the deity spoke by his mouth! Nourshivan said, FORMERLY I GAVE MY OWN MONEY: NOW I GIVE THAT OF MY PEOPLE.

A P O L O G U E XIV.

A KING of Persia had extended an hand of iniquity over his people: he held them in abject slavery; and augmented their misery by open scorn. Impatient of the harsh and humiliating yoke, the greater part of his subjects left their country, and sought a refuge among strangers. The revenues of the prince diminished with the number of his subjects. His neighbours profited by his folly. His states were attacked, and the discontented soldiers defended them feebly. He was dethroned.

A KING ought to nourish his people even with his own substance; because he holds his kingdom of his people. Every subject is the soldier of a just king.

A P O L O G U E . XV.

A KING, on his coming to the throne, had found immense wealth in the coffers of his father. The hand of magnificence was opened; and the riches of the prince were diffused among the people. A visir reproached the prince upon this: If an enemy, said he, attacks your frontiers, how will you defend yourself, after having distributed your money among your SUBJECTS? Then, replied the king, I will borrow it of my FRIENDS.

A P O L O G U E . XVI.

A RELIGIOUS man was much respected in Bagdad for his sincere virtue, and both the great men and the people thought that his prayers took heaven by storm. Haschas Joseph, tyrant of Bagdad, came to him and said,
 Pray

Pray God for me. Great God, said the religious, lifting his hands to heaven, take Hachas Joseph from this world! Wretch, thou curstest me, said the tyrant. I ask of heaven, replied the pious, the greatest favour it can grant thee and thy people.

APOLOGUE XVII.

THE wise Zirvan, after having enjoyed the confidence of the great Dachelim, king of the Indies, and the esteem of all his people, was persecuted by the visir Sourac. Zirvan beheld himself stripped of his wealth and employments. His wife died of sorrow. His son would have comforted him.—His son was in chains,

ZIRVAN, with eyes full of tears, went every day into the garden of the great Dachelim. There he lay at the foot of a palm-tree, and related to it his innocence, and his misfortunes.

A YOUNG man of the court saw and heard him. What, said he, dost thou complain to that tree? Dost thou think it sensitive?

As man is, answered Zirvan, and it doth not interrupt me,

APOLOGUE XVIII.

A YOUNG king gave himself up to dissipation, and to all the pleasures prepared for him by those infamous courtiers, who build their hopes on the weakness of their master. One day he sung at a feast these words, I have enjoyed the past; I enjoy the present: and am not solicitous of the future. A beggar, sitting under the hall-window, heard the king, and exclaimed, If thou art not solicitous about thy own lot, thou oughtest to be about ours.

THE king was struck with the speech. He approached the window, looked upon the poor man with attention, and, without speaking to him, ordered him a large sum of money; then left the hall in silence. He reflected upon his past life. It had been opposite to all his duties. He was ashamed of himself. He assumed the reins of government, which he had, till then, entrusted to his favorites. He laboured assiduously; and in a little time he re-established the order and happiness of the empire.

Com-

COMPLAINTS were, in the mean while, often made to him about the licentious life of the poor man whom he had enriched. At last he came one day to the gate of the palace, covered with his old rags, and begging alms. The king shewed him to one of the wise men of the court; for he had loved wise men since he had loved virtue; and said, Behold the effects of my goodness. I loaded that wretch with wealth; and my benevolence hath only corrupted him. Riches have been to him the source of new vices, and of new misery. It is true, said the sage; because thou hast given to ~~poverty~~ the rewards of labour.

tolerance

APOLOGUE XIX.

I FOUND one day, on the sea shore, a virtuous labourer whom a tiger had almost devoured. He was on the point of expiring, and in great agony. Great God, said he, I thank thee. I suffer pain, but not remorse,

A P O L O G U E XX.

THE son of Nourshivan saw one day a sage who had his eyes and arms lifted to heaven, and his face turned toward the east. He made to God this prayer, O great God, extend thy pity and benefits to the wicked. For the good it suffices that they are good.

A P O L O G U E XXI.

A YOUNG man, being intoxicated with wine, fell asleep by the side of the highway. A religious, passing along some time after, bitterly reviled him. The youth, now sober thro sleep, raised his head, and said, If good men pass a sinner, they pass him with benevolence.

A P O L O G U E XXII.

ABU HURURA used to think it his duty often to see Mustapha, to whom God be merciful. Mustapha one day said to him, O Abu Hurura, see me seldom that love may increase.

A P O L O G U E . XXIII.

A FOX running very fast was met by a civet cat. What crime have you committed, said the cat, that you should flee so swiftly? The fox answered, I flee because I heard hunters in the field who said they wished very much for a camel. Is there any likeness between you? No, said the fox, but if any of my enemies came in, and called me a camel, I know there would be no further enquiries.

A P O L O G U E . XXIV.

I REMEMBER that in my youth, having notions of severe piety, I used to rise in the night to watch, pray, and read the holy Koran. One night that I had never slept, but was wholly employed in those exercises, my father, a man of practical virtue, awaked while I was reading the Koran with silent devotion. Behold, said I to him, thy other children are lost in irreligious slumber, while I alone wake to praise God. Son of my soul, he answered, it is better to sleep than wake to remark the faults of thy brethren.

L E T.

L E T T E R LII.

A PROMISE is with me a matter of most religious consideration, and as you are pleased to remind me of one I made to you, on a former occasion, with regard to Tasso's Gerusalemme, I hasten to fulfil it by submitting to you an estimate of the merits of that work.

To proceed on this after the manner in which Mr. Addison hath treated the Paradise Lost will be most eligible; that is, first to consider the faults of the work, then to examine its worth under the distinct heads of Fable with its incidents, Persons, and Language.

THE faults of language have already been discussed in a former Letter, to which I refer: those that remain for present animadversion belong to the incidents and characters; and the defects of both are happily minute and rare.

THE only incident, which I can condemn in the whole fable, is to be found in the Thirty-third, and following, stanzas of the Fourteenth Canto, and a few stanzas of the Fifteenth. The story of the old Magician; his connexion with Peter the Hermit; his dwelling (XV. 3. &c.) are all unnatural to excess; *incredulus odi*. To a good Christian's being a Magician, in Lord Bacon's sense, I cannot confirm Mr. Addison's objection. The popular superstition hath white wizards, and black wizards; magicians who deal with the demons of Platonism, and with devils. The Eastern creed makes Salomon a magician and pious prince, without suspicion of dissonancy. It is not therefore to this person's being a pious magician that I object, but to the unnecessary miracles that are diffused around him; not to the Character, but to the Incidents which attend it.

WITH regard to the faulty Characters in the Gerusalemme, I think that there are far too many female warriors in it. We are obliged to Virgil for the first personage of this sort; the severe sense of Homer admitted no such dreams. Dacier hath well observed that a circumstance
that

that is positive fact in real life, might yet be much too improbable for poetry. We know from history that Vermina, the daughter of Syphax, was in the field fighting in assistance of Hannibal, when he received his last defeat from Scipio; a circumstance, which, being so recent, probably suggested Camilla to Virgil. We know from history the martial spirit of Bonduca, of many Scandinavian ladies, and the like; yet all these will not vindicate the admission of female warriors into poetry, where the GRAND TRUTH OF NATURE is the object, not the paltry truth of fact. Tasso hath however a very strong apology to offer for his sometimes making the word *warrior* of the feminine gender, and that is the coincidence of his story with the times and manners of chivalry: times and manners which presented so many instances of this solecism in *costume*, as almost to elevate truth of fact into truth of nature.

So much for the faults of the Gerusalemme: they are not many; yet the eye of critical justice will never be able to find more. The beauties fortunately present themselves at more length.

THE

THE FABLE is certainly one of the very best for epic poetry that ever was chosen. It is superior to that of the Iliad, as much as the Sepulchre of Christ was thought at the period of the action, (and to which in all poetry we must ever accommodate our minds,) to exceed the value of a strumpet; as much as the object of the most zealous adoration of half the globe was superior to the *teterrima belli causa*.

THE Fable was so grand and general, had Tasso managed it to its utmost advantage, as to interest every nation in Europe by the detail of the exploits of its own warriors. It may indeed be noted as a blemish in the conduct of the fable, that Tasso is always an Italian and not an European. He never dwells with apparent satisfaction but upon the glorious deeds of his own countrymen, who had in fact the smallest share in the enterprise. Homer's fable only nationally interested the Greeks and neighbouring states; Tasso's might have nationally interested every country of Europe, had he used it with proper liberality. As it stands it is a great and interesting Fable to every reader; tho, it must at the same time be

con-

confessed, that it might have been rendered more so to an infinite degree.

MOST of the INCIDENTS must be allowed to have great novelty and merit. None of them are foreign to the work, or can properly be called epifodes, like Virgil's of Dido, which hath no sort of relation to his fable. The incident of Olindo and Sophronia, tho one of the most detached, is infinitely more a part of the Gerusalemme, than the adventure with Dido is of the Eneid; and were it much less so, its eminent beauty must preclude it from all censure: if we condemn it, we must crown it with laurel. Most of the incidents have moreover that pleasing air of miracle, which offends not probability, and affords the genuine pleasure of poetry to the reader. Those incidents, around which this fairy light is not cast, maintain their native force with great dignity and interest. The grand incident of Armida's intervention, with its consequences, is masterly to a supreme degree: the miraculous is thro-out carried to all its height, yet with the constant preservation of a severe probability. The departure of Rinaldo from the camp is artfully managed.

managed. Had he left it with the herd of warriors who followed Armida, the dignity of his character would have suffered violation. A stronger cause, and worthy of the effect, presents itself to us; and saves the fame of Rinaldo and of Tasso.

THE subsequent amorous adventures of Rinaldo and Armida, Tasso appears to me to have taken the hint of from those of Mars and Venus, as beautifully painted by the celebrated Agnolo Poliziano in his *Stanze*, written upwards of half a century before the *Gerusalemme*. If you have not read the Italian poetry of Poliziano, you have a great pleasure yet to come. His *Stanze* are exquisite, and his Dithyrambic Ode beginning

Ognun' sequa Baccho te!
 Baccho, Baccho, evoc!
 Chi vol beber, chi vol bere
 Vegna a beber, vegna qui, &c.

to be found at the end of his *Orfeo* deserves high praise. The best edition of his *Stanze*, &c. is that of Padua 1765.

To

To return. The pastoral incident in the Seventh book is a delicious relief from the scenes of war and horror which precede it. Nothing can have a more pleasing effect on the imagination than such contrasts, when managed with artificial propriety. The return to prospects of the greatest horror and sublimity in nature, which the after part of this Seventh Book presents, is still an example of the happy effect of contrast of incident, which is never perceived but by a reader of some taste; whereas contrast of character is glaring, and of no art or effect. It is always a sure mark of a writer's inexperience in portraits when he is obliged to set them off by foils.

THE incident of the death of Sueno and his host in the Eighth Book, seems to me more of an unnecessary episode than the tale of Olindo and Sophronia, so much objected to by small critics. It may be historic truth, for aught I remember, for I have not now the *Gesta Dei per Francos* at hand, but I fear it is not poetic truth. *Cui bono?* What purpose doth it serve? Yet, after all, he must be a severe critic who would range it with the faults of the Gerusalemme.
It

It bears a general connexion with the piece in different minute after relations ; which is surely enough for its vindication. Can so much be said for the ghost of Dido ?

To dwell on all the incidents of the Gerusalemme were inconsistent with my purpose ; I shall therefore content myself with proceeding to hint at only the principal. Soliman's introduction to Aladin, in the Tenth Book, is a very great improvement on that of Ulyses to Alcinous in the Seventh book of the Odyssæy. The whole adventure with Ismeno is masterly, and superlatively pleasing to the imagination. Tasso's very imitations are in that original style, which, I think, you before agreed is the only possible merit which imitation can have ; and in fact none but original writers can imitate in this way.

The story of Clorinda is evidently built upon the Ethiopic History of Heliodorus, a work of the very first merit. The incident of her dying by the hands of Tancred, her lover, is artfully wrought up, and hath no small claim to the pathetic.

H h

IN

IN the Thirteenth Book the enchanted wood, and apparition of the city of fire, are incidents of miracle, *speciosa miracula*, which approach to the sublime. The principal incident of the next Canto hath already been mentioned in terms of reprobation.

IN the Fifteenth Canto the voyage of the two warriors is exquisitely pleasing to the imagination. Tasso, in the first edition of his poem, made them go to America, and beyond; but well altered this, and confined their voyage to the length of the Canary or Fortunate islands. Indeed it was a violation of probability to suppose that three persons, natives of Europe were in America in the Eleventh century, and yet that continent remain undiscovered till the Fifteenth; tho these Europeans returned in safety to a whole army of their countrymen, and must have been supposed to have related this adventure to them in terms of due admiration. The fifteen rescinded stanzas are however well worthy of Tasso, and as I dare say you have not seen them, I shall give you one or two.

THE

THE first describes the cross, a constellation of the southern hemisphere.

Miran quasi duo nuvoli di molte
 Luci in un congregate, e, in mezzò a quelle,
 Girar con angustissime rivolte
 Due pigre e brune e picciolette stelle:
 E sovra lor, di Croce in forma accolte,
 Quattro più grandi luminoze e belle,
 Eccovi i lumi opposti al freddo Plauastro;
 Che qui segnano (disse) il Polo d' Austro.

Miran due merghi indi, con l' ale molli
 Quasi radendo andar l' onda marina:
 La fatal donna a i duo Guerrier mostrolli,
 Per segno che la ripa è già vicina.
 Et ecco di lontano oscuri colli
 Scopron de l' umil terra peregrina.
 Lor nel petto un desio subito viene
 Di lasciar l' acque, e di calcar l' arene.

These two describe the pacific ocean, and the isles on one of which Armida's station was at first placed by Tasso.

Escon del breve stretto al oceano
 Vasto et immenso, il qual co' venti ha tregua;
 Si ch' onda pur non dissaguaglia il piano
 Cui stabil calma, a quasi eterna, adegua:
 Or, perche 'l corso, che da senno umano
 Retto non è, rapidamente segua,

Spinge

Spinge sempre soave, e sempre eguale,
 Gli avventurosi erranti aura fatale.

A destra é lungo tratto : e quivi e il Guito,
 E co'l ricco Peru l' aurea Castiglia.
 Ma la nave, seguendo il manco lito,
 Ver la terra anco ignota il cammin piglie ;
 E trova un mar, sì d' Isole fornito
 Che l' Egeo con le Cicladi somiglia.
 E già da che lasciar l' arene Ibere
 Eran dieci albe scorse, e dieci sere.

IN the Sixteenth Canto the incident of Rinaldo's immediate assent to the persuasions of the two warriors is much too rapid. As it was the hinge upon which the crisis of the poem turned, no art should have spared to render it interesting by many difficulties and solutions. The warriors inducing Rinaldo to listen to the expostulations of Armida is an article still more unfortunate. It was their part to hurry him off ; his to delay.

The circumstance, in the next book, of the Soldan of Egypt giving the command of his vast forces to a lieutenant is very ill imagined. It's being conformable to history were no excuse. Had the soldan led them himself, and
 fought

fought himself with Godfrey, and fallen by his hand, more grandeur and more interest would have accrued to the catastrophe of this immortal poem. Not to mention that a lieutenant was an improper personage to be the commander of so many auxiliary kings.

THE incidents in the Eighteenth Canto are, as usual with Tasso, very well ordered. The scenes in the next are an exquisite relief from the repetition of general battles which is so apt to disgust. Erminia's meeting with Tancred is most artfully contrived, and wrought up to no mean share of pathos. The adventures of Vafrino have all that interest which extreme danger, such as must always attend the most dishonourable office of a spy, never fail to raise.

IN the Twentieth and Last Book Tasso hath drawn from History the most grand and interesting catastrophe of any epic poem in the world without exception. The city of Jerusalem is taken, the sepulchre of Christ freed, in the Eighteenth Book. What then remained? History tells us that, four or five

H h 3

days

days after the taking the holy city, the vast forces of the sultan of Egypt, amounting to near 100,000 infantry, and 40,000 horse, came to assail the victors now weakened by repeated conflicts to about 12,000 men if I remember right. Victory however declared in favour of the Christians, with a slaughter of the enemy almost unparalleled. What a glorious catastrophe! A catastrophe at the same time absolutely necessary to fulfil the event. Tasso hath availed himself of it, as indeed a writer of half his talents must have done. It hath already been remarked that it might have been heightened; but, as it stands, I do not hesitate to pronounce it the grandest close that an epic poem can possibly have,

Not to intrude too much on your patience, the further consideration of this wonderful poem shall be deferred till a future occasion.

LETTER

L E T T E R LIII.

THE hypocrisy you laugh at is very common. Literature hath its hypocrisies as well as religion. That which you mention, in terms of just derision, is one of the most frequent, where a man who is sensible that he hath studied a branch of science much, and knows the value of his opinions concerning it, yet pretends to submit, with modest deference, to the sentiments of people whose ignorance he knows to conviction. Can any hypocrisy be more gross? Were it not much more manly to assume that noble *confidentia sui*, one of the best of the ancient virtues, the parent of many other virtues, but now unknown to us, or unknown as a virtue? Is sincerity, that noblest attribute of the moral character of man, to be sacrificed on the altar of false modesty?

FROM principles of the same hypocrisy we often see opinions contrary to truth, but which happen to be affirmed by writers of established

reputation, assented to in silence by others of equal talents, who know their falsity, but dare not set their judgment against that of authors of celebrity; not from modesty, for that man cannot be found who will confess the mind of another to be superior to his own, but from base hypocrisy of modesty. Independent of this vice of simulation, Science would advance in the world with double rapidity. Names, and pretended deference to them, have been the great barriers in every age that have confined knowledge to half its proper bounds.

A YET more glaring literary hypocrisy is that by which an ignorant man assumes the garb of science; as the worst hypocrisy in the moral world is that by which a vicious man assumes the mask of religion. In the latter a hypocrite may often be discovered by pushing his simulation too far; and in the like manner a literary impostor is apt, not to display too much learning, for he hath got none; but, to use the character of a learned man in the extreme. He shakes his head at the most trivial question, and, with many hems and ha's, says it is a difficult point, a very difficult point indeed,

deed, and would require very mature examination. When any person present says the point is very easy, takes it in hand, and solves it to the satisfaction of every body, the hypocrite of learning shakes his head, says that solution is trivial; and perhaps is polite enough to hint that it equals the understanding of the audience; but that he upon proper occasion, and to a learned company, could have given a much more profound account of the matter.

You cannot imagine, my dear friend, what an important thing a shake of the head is. It makes a man look so wise! I have known people get fame, pleasure, opulence, only by shaking their heads; tho, God knows, to use a trite witticism, there was nothing in them. A shake of the head from an ignorant man is learning; from a mean man, greatness; from a dull man, wit; from a stupid man, genius; from a poor man, wealth; from a fool, wisdom. I wonder no wit should have written a treatise *On the art of shaking the head*. It were surely capable of much illustration; and no writer need be ashamed of handling it, when he hath the example of Mr. Addison before him,

him, who hath written at some length *On the art of furling the fan*, an instrument of equal ventosity. But, lest you should be shaking your head at me all this while, I shall here close my Letter,

LETTER

LETTER LIV.

I HAVE heard it seriously debated in conversation that it is impossible for any writer to obtain a false fame, and that celebrity must ever be the fruit of some proportionable merit. This opinion, as false as it is plausible, deserves a confutation at some length from its important consequences to the interests of literature,

THE fame of a good writer resembles the descent of a pyramid, most minute at first, but swelling to an enormous base, which stands firm as the earth, and defies every tempest, and even the silent waste of time. False fame resembles the pyramid likewise in every thing but its durability; but in another view, for it rises from a broad base, and tapers to nothing. Hence that applause, which is wide at first, is very seldom lasting; and durable reputation almost always springs from very minute beginnings.

A

A good writer is seldom or never popular at first. His ideas are so much out of the common line, that he is not understood, much less tasted, by the mob of his day. True judges, men of real science, are always his first admirers from congeniality of mind; and his fame, when swelled to a vast river, is yet of the utmost purity, because its sources are clear. The applause of true judges is the only living fame which a writer of true taste can relish. When popular acclamation rises around him, he will be ready to say; with that ancient Greek, upon hearing an unexpected roar of praise from the populace, whom he was addressing; *Have I said a foolish thing?*

THE opinion of men of learning always leads the mob, when it hath had a proper period to operate: the opinion of the mob is seldom or never that of men of learning; and in no instance can lead it.

THE fame of the most superlative writers is, even after thousands of years, always confined to superior minds: the popular acclaim is only an unmeaning echo of it. Du Bos hath well
observed

observed that the true reputation of Homer is at this day confined to those who can read and admire him in the original; perhaps amounting to two hundred persons in the world: his other pretended admirers disgrace his genuine fame, and are the mere babbling echoes of the former.

THE like may be said of every superlative writer. Is Pindar, is Tacitus the minion of the populace? Our own Milton, our Shakspeare universal as he is, are not understood, or the least relished, by one person in a thousand who echo their celebrity with open mouth. Were the genuine sentiments of the million enquired into, it would be discovered that any fashionable bauble of the diurnal kind is of far more estimation, in their sight, than the immortal labours of these glorious writers. What is the use of diamonds to them? Can they eat them? No, with the cock in the fable, grains of corn were better; and where corn is not to be had, even chaff.

BUT before the breeze of time that chaff vanishes: while diamonds remain and blaze to eternity.

MEN

Many of superior talents have it not in their power to adjust the reputation of a work at once. They must have time to consider it. Perhaps the author is known to many of them; and they tremble at the suspicion of partiality. Perhaps they are careless; perhaps they are invidious; perhaps they are foes of the author.

MEANWHILE a work of real merit is sure to be neglected, for where shall the cattle go when there is no guide? The little craft are coasting round their own paltry shores, and know not that a new world is discovered. If they did, how shall they sail to it, without powers, and without a compass? The small fishes they find at home are enough for them; they leave the exploration of the treasures of other climates to those who are in possession of superior means of navigation.

THE fame of few writers, whose works are not of a more temporary kind, can be estimated in the century in which they live. One hundred years of purgatory may with great justice be looked upon as assigned to most authors before they pass to paradise or damnation.

ROUSSEAU I think observes that the path to true fame, like that to the temple of virtue, is most arduous and difficult: and it may be added that, where this difficulty is not found, it is much to be doubted that the path is not the true one.

I know not however if living fame which is almost always false, be not of more real moment to any writer, or artist, than posthumous and eternal. The latter will never buy him a great coat; whereas the former heaps wealth and honours upon his happy head. Living fame is sweet music to the ears, tho' one were even certain that it will die with us; posthumous fame is unenjoyable by us, is of no existence to us. The false prescience of it affords high satisfaction to the vain-glorious fool; but the true prescience of it slightly affects the great and the wise.

It hath already been observed that legitimate celebrity is only to be found in the mouths of true judges, who are fully as rare as good writers; in so much that for fifty years after Milton's *Comus* was published, nobody knew
its

its worth but Sir Henry Wotton: The delay, which true judges always adopt in pronouncing upon superior works, hath also been stated: The public in the mean time, led by caprice or fashion, bestow their applause, which they ought carefully to hoard for real merit, upon every gewgaw that comes in their way. Hence the number of false reputations is almost infinite; and in proportion to the true about one thousand to one.

ANY person who doubts if fame may ever be surreptitiously acquired, need only to look into the title pages, and cotemporary productions, of a thousand works of the last and present century, In the first he will see some times the Twelfth edition of some poetical or other work which disgraces the human mind: in the last he will observe the vain and transitory praises bestowed on it by writers of equal minuteness of intellect. For one instance in a thousand of these facts, Cotton's Virgil Travestie had Fourteen editions, Milton's Poems hardly two; and see the praises of the *matchless Orinda's* poems in Cowley, and others. Who was she? Can there be a stronger illustration of
my

my position, that false reputations actually exist? Nay I know that I could from this very century muster up complete evidences of my position, that they surpass the true in the proportion of at least one thousand to one.

I know not how it is, but it is certainly a more favourable symptom of a work to have enemies at first, than admirers. The ingenious author of the Book De l'Esprit, a work in which great talents are exerted to support bad principles, observes with truth that superiority is sure to create enemies. The maxim of most people is that of the Ephesians, *If any one excels among us, let him go and excell elsewhere.* M. Helvetius hath aptly distinguished the esteem professed for writers of repute into two sorts; an esteem of prejudice, taken up upon the word of others, and an esteem of sentiment. The last I call the only foundation of true fame, when it is the sentiment of a superior soul. He marks Corneille as a writer whose esteem stands wholly upon prejudice, and not sentiment.

WHEN I mention popular fame, as of no account in forming our judgement of the worth of a modern writer, I do not mean to speak but of works out of the common class; works that give new forms to human talents. Works of themselves merely popular, as novels, and the like, need not stand the test of their century before their fame may be called permanent. A table of periods that must pass over different works, before the stamp of lasting worth is put upon them, might be curious. Let us try it. Suppose :

Epic poetry	-	-	-	100 years.
Dramatic poetry	-	-	-	50 years.
History	-	-	-	100 years.
Lyric poetry	-	-	-	100 years.
Novels	-	-	-	50 years.
Satiric poetry	-	-	-	20 years.
Didactic poetry	-	-	-	20 years.
Philosophy, Natural		-		2000 years.
Moral	-	-		10 years.
Criticism	-	-	-	100 years.
Miscellanies	-	-	-	50 years.
Panegyrics	-	-	-	1 hour.
Pastoral poetry	-	-		5 minutes.

THE

THE reason of the short space allowed for the two last, is their putrescent quality ; which makes it not safe to keep them long before they are eaten.

L E T T E R LV.

THE examination of the merits of Tasso's Gerusalemme shall now, with your permission, be concluded. The Fable, with its Incidents, hath been the subject of former discussion : there now remain the Characters; the Language; the Particular Beauties. All which shall be illustrated with as much brevity as possible.

To begin then with the Characters : Tasso yields only to Homer for the variety of his persons. Of their strength I cannot say so much : most of the characters in the Gerusalemme might certainly, with much ease, have permitted great heightening of additional colours. His warriors are by no means ill diversified ; Rinaldo is a most distinct personage from Tancred, or Godfrey : and the like may with justice be said of his other warriors. But to be a little more explicit.

GODFREY,

GODFREY, the chief commander, is described as a character of the first value : prudent with courage ; pious with generosity. Perhaps it may be justly said that he is too perfect. Homer, the secretary of Nature, draws no perfect characters. Gravina with great ingenuity and truth observes that he almost alone of all writers paints the true manners and natural passions of men as they are. As in life itself, his virtuous characters have vice, and the vicious virtue. A writer without experience thinks the more perfect his characters are in vice or virtue, the more perfect they are in poetry. The reverse is the truth. Mixt characters are alone fit for the purposes of fable. Milton knew this so well that he paints Satan himself as a dubious character.

RINALDO, perhaps the next in importance, is an admirable character, and new to epic poetry. His extreme youth, for, if I remember right, he is not eighteen at the period of the poem, makes his part extremely interesting. He is as different from Achilles as may be ; tho the general idea of his part in the poem is evidently hinted by Homer.

TANCRED again is a most distinct personage from any other in the poem, tho to deduce the marks of distinction might require more room than we can now spare.

THE old warrior **RAYMOND** hath nothing to do with Nestor. His old age makes his part fully as interesting, as the youth of Rinaldo doth his.

THE hermit **PETER** is a very fine and new personage; and might have given occasion for admirable painting, had Tasso but known how to avail himself of his fable to the utmost.

DUDON, GUELFO, SUENO, VAFRINO, and others, are all characters which at least atone for their want of strength by their variety. And the like may justly be said even of the most inferior characters in the poem. So much for the Christian persons.

IF we pass to the Mahometan we shall find equal variety with much more strength. Tasso seems to have thought that the Christian system prevented any deep shades of discrimination
being

being thrown round a character; while the Mahometan, more indulgent to human frailty, left ample scope for the natural man to shew himself. In this view ALADIN, SOLIMAN, ALTAMORE, ISMENO, ARGANTES, EMIRENO, TISIPHERNES, are all characters of as much strength as variety.

THAT of Soliman, the dethroned king of the Turks of Asia Minor, combating against the Christians who had dethroned him, is particularly strong, new, and interesting.

THE part of ISMENO, the Magician, is no less strong and new to epic poetry. Tasso hath in this, and other parts of his poem, admirably availed himself of the system of the middle ages, and of chivalry, to diversify his machinery. Magic is certainly the most fit for the purposes of poetry of any supernatural assistance in the world. Nothing is so delightful to the imagination; and the imagination is the sole judge of poetry.

OF the *Female* characters on both sides I have already spoken; but even in their condemnation must confess that they have a fine variety.

THE LANGUAGE of the Gerusalemme hath in general all that exquisite melody which is the grand characteristic of the Italian tongue. It hath not the simplicity of Homer, because it was not written 2500 years ago; and they who look for pears upon an elm-tree will, as Sancho observes, only find sore eyes. Jestling apart, nothing can well be more absurd and ridiculous, than to estimate one writer's language, or other talents, by comparison with those of another. Nature knows no comparisons. Tasso's language may boldly be pronounced as perfect in its kind as that of Homer. The first is a monarch in laced cloths; the latter a monarch in plain. Is the first less a king than the other?

THE language of Tasso I allow to be figurative; but contend that it is, with all its exquisite figures, much more correct, and to me more pleasing, than the elegant negligence of Ariosto. The dress of the Gerusalemme is most artfully inwoven, but it is inwoven with gold; and, with all its richness, is yet as easy and becoming as the simple attire of some other poems. Every reader must allow Milton's style to be much more inverted and figurative than that

that of Tasso : yet this hath never been laid to Milton's charge. So mad is prejudice !

THE stanza used by Tasso must be allowed melodious, but its melody is uniform : and uniformity, the very worst fault versification can have, is only to be avoided by using blank verse. It is therefore to be wished that he had followed Trissino, and not Ariosto, in his versification. The question with regard to blank verse and rime is reducible to this proposition, Is pleasure the greater for being diversified ?

Tasso's stanza hath disadvantages : it obliges the writer thrice to use the same rimes ; and to adopt tautology, or unnecessary addition, that his stanza may be completed without passing to another subject. It hath also advantages : the set rimes of themselves often introduce thoughts that would not otherwise have arisen : the completion of the stanza will often occasion more minute description, one of the chief qualities of poetry.

To consider the language of Tasso at more length were inconsistent with my present purpose. It remains to point out a very few of the PARTICULAR BEAUTIES of the poem.

IN

In Canto I. this description of the young Rinaldo is delicate :

Ma il fanciullo Rinaldo è sovra questi
E sovra quanti in mostra eran condutti.
Dolcemente feroce alzar vedresti
La regal fronte, e in lui mirar sol tutti
L'eta precorse e la speranza; e presti
Pareano i fior quando n' uscìro i frutti.
S'el miri fulminar ne l'armie, avvolto
Marte lo stimi, Amor, se scopre il volto.

This simile is fine.

Non e sì grato a i caldi giorni il tuono,
Che speranza di pioggia al mondo apporte,
Come fu caro a le feroci genti
L'altero suon de bellici instrumenti.

No description can surpass this of the army on their march.

In tanto il Sol, che da celesti campi
Va più sempre avanzando, e in alto ascende,
L'arme percote, e ne trae fiamme e lampi.
Tremuli e chiari, onde le viste offende,
L'aria par di faville intorno avvampi,
E quasi d'alto incendio in forma splende.
E co fieri nitriti il suono accorda
Del ferro scosso, e le campagne affordo.

This

This maxim is a most just one:

**E l'aspettar del male e mal peggiore
Forse, che non parebbe il mal presente.**

In the II. Book, this brief description of a timid lover well deserves all the admiration it hath gained:

Brama affai, poco spera, e nulla chiede.

In the next stanza save one this line,

Le negligenze sue sono artifici,

in one of the most happy antitheses ever written.

Such lines as,

**Pur maggior sente il duol, per ch' non duolse ;
and,**

L'alte non temo, e l'umili non sdegno ;

are worth whole pages of common poetry. Sentimental axiomatic beauties are certainly the most difficult of any of the smaller graces of poetry, and ought to be highly valued. Tasso is full of them. Take two more from the same Canto.

**Gran fabbro di calunnie adorne in modi
Novi, che sono accuse, e pajon lodi.
Ma verace valor, benche negletto
E di se stesso a se fregio affai chiaro.**

In

In the III. Canto this simile of the Christian army's joy upon the first sight of Jerusalem must not be omitted,

**Così di naviganti audace stuolo
Che muova a ricercar estranio lido,
E in mar dubbioso, e sotto ignoto polo,
Provi l'onde fallaci e'l vento infido ;
S'al fin discopre il disfatto suolo,
Lo saluta da lunge in lieto grido :
E l'uno al l'altro il mostra, e in tanto obblia
La noja e'l mal de la passata via.**

This description of the appearance of the Christian host from the towers of Jerusalem is wonderful.

**Da la citade in tanto un, ch 'a le guarda
Sta d'alta torre, e scopre i monti e i campi,
Cola giuso la polve alzarfi guarda,
Si che par che gran nube in aria stampi :
Par che baleni quella nube e arda,
Core di fiamme gravida e di lampi :
Poi lo splendor de lucidi metalli
Scerne, e distingue gli uomini e i cavalli.**

The sudden discovery of Clorinda, in her combat with Tancredo, may with justice be ranked among the beauties of the poem.

E

E le chiome dorate al vento sparse,
Giovane donna in mezzo 'l campo apparse.

And

Lampeggiar gli occhi e folgorar gli sguardi ;
Dolci ne l'ira, or che farian nel riso ?

with others, are strokes which, tho minute,
speak the master.

THE death of Dudon is worthy of Tasso.

Gli * apri tre volte, e i dolci rai del cielo
Cerco fruire, e sovra un braccio alzarfi ;
E tre volte ricadde, e fosco velo
Gli occhi adombro, che stanchi al fin ferrarsi :
Si dissolvono i membri, e 'l mortal gelo
Irrigiditi, e di sudor gli ha sparsi.

IN Canto IV. Satan's speech is very eloquent ;
and it may here be observed, of all the speeches
in the Gerusalemme, that they are of the very
first eloquence, finely adapted to the characters
and the occasions : they may therefore be justly
regarded as some of the most striking beauties
of the poem.

THIS sentiment in Satan's speech is sublime,
and Miltonic.

Ebbero i piu felici allor vittoria ;
Rimase a noi d'invitto ardir la gloria.

* occhi

THE

THE description of Armida is exquisitely beautiful. The fort  of Tasso is beauty ; that of Milton sublimity.

BUT to proceed even at this rate would prolong this letter too much, you will therefore excuse me if I hasten to a close ; and enumerate any other particular graces of this poem as briefly as possible. Were the whole beauties of the Gerusalemme narrated, a vast volume, and not a letter, ought to be the vehicle.

TASSO hath often made excellent use of ancient apophthegms, as in this instance of a thousand :

I gradi primi

Piu meritar, che conseguir, desio. C. V.

He is likewise full of political wisdom: take this axiom for another instance of a thousand.

Che spesso avvien che, ne maggior perigli,
Sono i piu audaci gli ottimi configli.

THESE reproaches made by Tancred to Argante are most spirited, and much in Homer's style.

Fassi innanzi gridando: Anima vile,

Ch' ancor ne le vittorie infame sei, &c. C. VI.

This

This image in stanza 92. of the same Canto is admirable.

Gode Amor, ch' e presente, e tra se ride.

IN Canto VII. Tancred's adventure at the Castle of Armida is a fine instance of the advantages which the system of chivalry confers on poetry. The battle of old Raimond with Argante is extremely interesting : this comparison of Argante, almost disarmed and vanquished, is admirable :

E par senza governo, in mar turbato,
Rotte vele, e antenne, eccelsa nave.

From Canto VIII. take this instance of a fine climax ;

Ch' ancor v'e chi sospetti, e che di frodo
Goffredo accusi, e chi le accuse approve?

and from the next Canto this yet finer climax of the comparative kind. He speaks of the foldan Soliman.

Fiume, ch' arbori insieme, e case svela ;
Folgore, che le torri abbatta, ed arda ;
Terremoto, che 'l mondo empia d' orrore ;
Son picciole sembianze al suo furore.

THIS

THIS couplet, on the death of a young warrior, is perhaps the most exquisitely beautiful to be found in poetry: *L' alma lascio mesta*

L' aure soavi de la vita, e i giorni
De la tenera età, lieti e adorni.

IN the XI. Canto this circumstance, descriptive of the decline of a battle toward evening, is very picturesque.

E de le trombe istesse il suono langue.

THE tears of Aladin in Canto XII. almost equal those of Satan in Paradise Lost, Book I. The first are as strong and unexpected marks of extreme joy, as the latter of uttermost despair :

Sollevo il re le palme, e un lieto pianto
Giu per le cresse guancie a lui cadette : &c.

The address to Night in the same Canto hath been justly admired.

IN Book XIII. the horrible sounds that issue from the enchanted forest are described with great strength of fancy.

Esce all' or de la felva un suon repente,
Che par rimbombo di terren che trema.

E'l mormorar de gli austri in lui si sente,
 E'l pianto d'onda, che fra scogli geme.
 Come rugge il leon, fischia il serpente ;
 Come urla il lupo, e come l'orso freme,
 V'odi ; e v'odi le trombe, e v'odi il tuono :
 Tanti e si fatti suoni esprime un suono.

A variation of the same sound in Stan. 40. is
 alike dreadful to the imagination :

E trarne un suon, che flebile concento
 Par d'umani sospiri, e di singulti :
 E un non so che confuso instilla al core
 Di pietà, di spavento, e di dolore.

The gate of dreams in Canto XIV. surpasses
 the two of Homer so poorly copied, as usual,
 by Virgil.

Non lunge a l'auree porte, ond' esce il Sole,
 E cristallina porta in oriente ;
 Che per costume innanzi aprir si suole,
 Che si dischiuda l'uscio al di nascente.
 Da questa escono i sogni, i quai Dio vuole
 Mander per grazia a pura e casta mente.
 Da questa or quel, ch' al pio Buglion discende,
 L'ali dorate in verso lui distende.

In Book XV. the simile of the Dove's neck is
 exquisite: but to quote similes were endless, for

I know not one in the poem that is not superlative in its kind. The description of the sailing in Stan. 8. 9. must delight every reader. The comparisons in Stan. 60. are so fine as to demand particular remark, in spite of the general praise of Tasso's similes which I have just expressed.

THE reproaches of Armida to Rinaldo in Canto XVI. are of exquisite spirit :

Vattene pur crudel, con quella pace
Che lasci a me ; vattene iniquo omai.
Me tosto ignudo spirto ombra seguace
Indivisibilmente a tergo avrai :
Nova furia co serpi e con la face
Tanto t'agitero quanto t'amai. &c.

THIS stroke, tho minute, speaks the master.

Mille affetti in un guardo appajon misti.

Cant. XVIII.

TASSO very often attains the moral axiomatic sublime : here is another instance from Book XIX.

Ov'e, Signor, la tua virtute antica ?
(Disse il Soldan tutto crucciofo all' ora)
Tolgaci i regni pur forte nemica :—
Che'l regal pregio e nostro, e'n noi dimora.

and

and yet another instance from the same Canto:

Prese i nemici han sol le mura e i tetti,
 E'l vulgo umil, non la cittade, han presa:
 Che nel capo del Re, ne vostri petti,
 Ne le man vostre, e la citta compresa.

IN the Last Book the description of Godfrey's appearance before the decisive battle is wonderful.

Vassene e tale e in vista il sommo Duce,
 Ch' altri certa vittoria indi presume:
 Novo favor del Cielo in lui riluce,
 E'l fa grande e augusto oltra il costume:
 Gli empie d'onor la faccia, e vi riduce
 Di giovinezza il bel purpureo lume:
 E ne l'atto de gli occhi e de le membra
 Altro che mortal cosa egli rassembra.

THESE minute touches are excellent:

E di mezzo la tema esce il diletto.

E nel cadere egli ode
 Dar gridendo i nemici al colpo lode.

La via d'onor de la salute e via.

NOTHING but the contracted limits of a Letter can excuse my making so diminutive a selection of beauties from a performance so rich

in them. Indeed you will easily perceive that my aim, thro the whole, hath been rather to avoid noticing the innumerable beautiful passages that presented themselves, than to search for them, as a critic of less contracted province ought to do.

LETTER

L E T T E R LVI.

LORD BACON, in his Essays, has given us what he calls *the true marshalling of the degrees of sovereign honour* in the following order. I. Founders of states, as Romulus, &c. II. Lawgivers as Lycurgus, Solon, &c. III. Deliverers of their country. IV. Enlargers and Defenders of their country, and dominion. V. Fathers of their country; as just kings and rulers.

THE names of several great men whom he classes under these heads I cannot approve : for instance in the I. he classes Cyrus, Cæsar, Ottoman. In the III. Augustus Cæsar, Vespasian, Aurelian, Theodoric, our Henry VII, and Henry IV of France. He seems to forget that he might have had from Greece immaculate examples of all his ranks of celebrity. However, the degrees cannot be objected to in any point, but this, that he ought to have placed his II^d rank first; for it is certainly a more difficult, and a more glorious, work to give laws to a

K k 3

state,

state, than to found it. The latter is a work of chance ; the former of labour, and profoundest science of every kind,

I HAVE often thought that it might be a matter of some curiosity, not to say importance, to attempt a similar scale of literary and scientific fame. The great branches of human art and science are, if I remember right, I. Natural and Moral Philosophy, II. Poetry, III. History, IV. Painting, V. Music, VI. Architecture, VII. Sculpture, VIII. Criticism, and other lesser kinds of prose writing. There is an infinite number of more minute discriminations of science ; but, upon examination, we shall find that true celebrity has only sprung from one or other of these greater sources, or their divisions. The greater sources are formed from a numerous variety of springs, upon any of which if a candidate's bark is properly launched, he may be carried into the universal ocean of fame with swelling sails. For example, in Natural Philosophy are contained Medicine, Chemistry, Botany, Astronomy, Geometry, &c, eminence in any of which is a sure path to lasting reputation : and the like is applicable to the other larger divisions.

COMMON

COMMON sense would lead us to think that the arts and sciences, which are of most utility to man, ought to be the highest objects of his esteem. In this view to determine the proportion of legitimate applause, which a superlative performance of any kind ought to have, we would only need to class it according to its real utility. Experience, however, is against this: for a capital poet or painter hath always larger and more lasting fame, than an inventor of the most useful art. This is easily accounted for. The inventor of an useful art is soon forgotten, because any art that is merely useful ceases almost with its invention to raise any admiration. Its daily use of itself precludes all gratitude to the inventor. Men, in their ingratitude, instead of wondering at the invention, only wonder why the art was not discovered before. Besides, the most useful art, if of trivial use, tho it may require the utmost power of mind to form the first idea of it, yet can be improved by almost every body: and these additional improvements totally stifle the first fame of the inventor. Not to mention that the name of the artist never appears on products of useful art, nor do their products

themselves last, how then can his fame be preserved? If it is, it must be in writing, the only immortal art we know: but he who preserves the fame of others in writing of any kind is certainly the more immediate heir of fame than those whose names he preserves. Hence authors themselves are the surest possessors of celebrity; and, next to them, those whom they condescend to applaud. Hence we should know nothing of the ancient painters, musicians, and other artists, did not we read of them in ancient volumes. Hence Homer will always inherit more renown than the inventor of the windmill; tho I suspect a rigid philosopher would decide, that the reputation of the latter ought to stand highest, because he deserves best of mankind.

It is from facts, then, and not from theory, that we should form an estimate of the degrees of scientific fame. One who accurately weighs the estimation, in which the respective arts and sciences are held by men of erudition, who are their only genuine judges, will find the scale to be much of this tenor.

- I. Epic Poetry.
- II. Dramatic Poetry.
- III. Moral Philosophy.
- IV. Natural Philosophy in general.
- V. History.
- VI. Lyric Poetry.
- VII. Medicine.
- VIII. Smaller epic poetry, or tale writing.
- IX. Architecture.
- X. Painting.
- XI. Music.
- XII. Sculpture.
- XIII. Fables.
- XIV. Novels.
- XV. Satiric Poetry.
- XVI. Didactic Poetry.
- XVII. Criticism, and other small prose writing.
- XVIII. Mathematics.
- XIX. Astronomy.
- XX. Geometry. Chronology. Geography.

THE other arts, if I rightly recollect, are so minute that they form a galaxy of stars, in which no difference of magnitude appears to the eye.

LET-

L E T T E R LVII.

NOTHING can be more just than your strictures on the folly and presumption of most critics. Criticism, which is indeed only the lady's maid of ability, like all those of that description, is fond of aping her mistress; dresses herself in her cast cloths, and looks upon herself as being as good as her lady. Criticism is, at best, only the pilot of Genius; only knows shores already explored, with the face of the coast, and soundings: when the captain commands the vessel upon an expedition to undiscovered isles, this poor pilot condemns his rashness with bitter exclamations, and despair of safety; while the captain is obliged to take the helm himself, attend to every rock and shoal, and conduct his daring ship into a port, from which he is to return with treasures yet unknown. When he hath done this, with a safety which valour always ensures, you cannot imagine how proud Mr. Pilot is. Like the
fly

fly upon the coach-wheel it was he, and he alone, whose cautious conduct guided the vessel into harbour. Now that he knows the road, he can instruct others, and does it with all the insolence of advice. But his instructions are always of the timid kind, and analogous to his own littleness of intellect. He derives from the success of this expedition, not arguments of enterprise for others of like adventure, but chilling dissuasions and tales of danger ; inso-much that, very much owing to his cowardly information, voyages to new latitudes of art are very rare ; and the man who attempts them with success may well be pronounced to have talents superior to those which found a state, or shake a potent empire to its inmost foundations.

CRITICISM may be defined to be, That science by which we are taught to form proper judgements of the merits, and defects, of the other arts and sciences. I have called Criticism a science, and not an art, because it is theoretical and not practical ; because there can be no art where there is no room for invention : because Criticism is merely a science,
and

and rests solely upon knowlege in the points of which it treats ; and that knowlege, if you will, is not even a science *per se*, but arises from the mental exertion of others ; yet does not ascend to analogy like other human sciences. For instance ; were a critic to judge from analogy that, because the beginning of the Iliad is simple, that of every epic poem ought to be so, he would judge wrong ; for this reason that a man of genius, his master, would tell him that there ought to be no analogy in poetry, and that the simplicity of Homer's beginning is a fault, not a beauty, for the great point of opening an epic poem is to raise the very utmost expectation ; and, allowing it a beauty, it is a beauty to be avoided by other writers, because any appearance of imitation never fails to disgust a superior judge.

CRITICISM, if I mistake not, originated with Aristotle, who was as fond of subduing the mental world, as his pupil Alexander was of conquering the habitable. After that this Aristotle, by dint of many a base trick and cavil, to be found in Athenæus, Elian, and other writers of antiquity, had usurped a tyrannical power
over

over almost every branch of science; he was, like his mad disciple, weeping for other worlds to vanquish. After conquering the Earth in his Political and Moral works, he had, upon the air-balloon of presumption, to use a metaphor which smells a little of anachronism, visited Mercury in his Topics, the Moon in his Treatise on the Soul, Venus in his Natural History, Mars in his Treatise on Rhetoric, Jupiter in his treatise on Heaven, Saturn in his other works. The planet of Poetry, like Herschel's discovery, was then rolling in new radiance thro the wastes of æther. To it goes Mr. Aristotle upon his air balloon, and returning tells us all about it. To drop the allegory, ere it grows stale ; to an impartial reader, who is able to judge for himself, it must be matter of infinite surprize how the authority of Aristotle should ever be any thing in poetry. All he hath done is to give a parcel of metaphysical names, his common trick, to different points of poetry ; which points he draws without any invention or addition from Homer and Sophocles. He then sits down with as much satisfaction as that Indian chief, who gets up every morning before sun-rise ; steps to the door of his cabin,

marks

marks with his finger the course the sun is to pursue in his day's journey, which he always takes care shall be the usual one ; and then returns in the glory of having given his directions to *the sun his brother*.

THE only thing Aristotle did in criticism was to give some names, almost as unintelligible as that *entelecheia* which hath cracked the brains of all his commentators, to different articles. He seems only to have strutted into the theatre of poetry to drop the curtain of obscurity over the scene of nature ; a demerit which the meanest menial belonging to the house could have had sufficient ability to incur the blame of as well as himself. Perhaps you will think this censure of Aristotle severe, but do not imagine it singular : the awful shades of Vittorius, Castelvetro, Gravina, the two last names in criticism superior to that of Aristotle, rise around me in its defence.

THIS mention of the earliest ancient critic might induce a review of the other critical writers of antiquity, by which indeed we should be better enabled to judge of the nature of criticism,

ticism, than by theoretic reasoning. But to give this at proper length would require other bounds, and deeper disquisition than the brief style of a letter will authorise. The other critics of antiquity you know are Dionysius of Halicarnassus ; the author of the treatise under the name of Demetrius Phalereus ; Hermogenes ; Longinus ; among the Greeks :—and among the Latins *instar omnium*, Quintilian, the only critic who ever deserved the name. To the three first may with justice be applied the noted distich,

Turpe est difficiles habere nugas :

Stultus et labor est ineptiarum.

Of Longinus the fourth I shall only repeat the just verdict of an Italian critic of the first repute ; namely, that he wrote on the sublime in a total ignorance of what it was. His work is in fact more applicable to the beautiful, than to the sublime ; a sure proof that he knew not what he was writing about. His praise of Neptune's horses leaping, like so many fleas in a blanket, is one instance of at least twenty of his false taste. If it be sublime to make the god's horses go so far at two, or at three leaps, were

were it not far more so to describe them as leaping the whole space at once? Can there be a sublime beyond which in its kind the most common mind may form conceptions? Surely not. Homer's idea is burlesque, and an instance of the false sublime, for this plain reason, that it presents a risible, and not a great image.

To Quintilian the highest reverence is due, as the only ancient writer in prose who knew how to criticise with sound sense and integrity of mind.

WHAT Quintilian is in prose, Horace is in poetry. His remarks, for the very term of critical *precepts*, which I was about to use, implies derision, are those of a master; yet like those of all critics are to be strongly discussed by the reader's own judgement: and in this view many of them will lie prostrate on the ground, like so many false idols before the deity of truth. This will always be the case with such criticisms as have no reasons alleged in their support; which are ever fully as absurd in the eyes of a reader of science as the verdict of a judge would be, ere he had lent an ear to the pleadings, and recapitulated the cause.

FROM

FROM the great rarity of good critics of antiquity those of modern days ought to judge of the extreme difficulty of writing with such propriety as to secure the fame of future ages. Just criticism itself is a dangerous province, upon the very boundaries of the empire of science ; where, because of its distance from the capital, the renown is by no means proportioned to the greatness of ability and enterprize, absolutely necessary to be exerted. To form a proper critical estimation of any work, the *Iliad* for instance, in all its parts would, I must assert, require talents double the size of the author's. For, if they are only equal, the mind of the critic will be homogeneous with that of the poet : he will consequently be capable of conceiving nothing beyond the work ; and his performance will consist only of flight efforts of admiration, and of blame ; not of such superior critical disquisition as may improve the art of which he treats ; and which alone forms the essence of just criticism. Suppose even that a critic should arise with twice the mental powers of Homer, an event that will never happen : suppose that his work had every perfection of criticism, wide views, profound re-

search, boundless treasures of erudition ; suppose it displayed a mind, that, like a telescope, could magnify distant worlds of genius, and shew them to the common eye ; and at the same time, with microscopic powers, could examine the most minute particle of phrase ; what, with all these supernatural attributes, would be the proportion of his fame ? Very small. The man of genius, like the sun, would dazzle nations ; while he a little planet of borrowed light would only glitter in obscurity.

IN speaking of criticism I have avoided treating of systematic, because the ancients knew no such thing ; it was left for the folly of the moderns to frame elements of universal criticism. An attempt than which nothing can be more absurd ; for if no critic hath yet arisen able fully to discuss one particular branch of this science, what shall we say of him who boldly undertakes to examine and illustrate the whole ?

THE only work that could prove of real advantage in criticism would be a selection of all the remarks made by illustrious writers relative to this study, accompanied with a modest explanation

planation and commentary, supported by examples. Such a work would go further to be of genuine utility to the arts and sciences than any species of system, tho digested by a critic of the most uncommon powers of mind.

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